

# Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs) Fact Sheet

PCBs were once widely used to insulate electrical equipment and as plasticizers. PCBs were banned in the late 1970s but are still in some old equipment and products. They have spread through the environment and take a long time to break down.

## PCBs are found in

- Some fatty fish like salmon and canned sardines. (Fatty fish are still good to eat. These fish are an excellent source of healthy fats [like “omega-3” fatty acids] and protein.)
- Some high-fat animal products like hamburger meat and ice cream.
- Some products and building materials produced before 1980, such as:
  - Caulk in older buildings, including schools.
  - Some old fluorescent light fixtures.
  - Some paint, wood floor finishes, plastics, and foam or fiberglass insulation.

## Possible health concerns

PCBs:

- Can harm the developing fetus and infant, possibly affecting growth and learning.
- Can interfere with the body’s natural hormones and affect the immune system.
- May decrease fertility.
- May increase cancer risk.

## Possible ways to reduce exposure

PCBs have been decreasing in the environment and food because they are no longer manufactured. You might further reduce your exposure by:

- Including plenty of variety in your diet.
- Trimming off skin from fish and fat from meat and cooking on a rack to let fat drain off.
- Washing your hands often, especially before eating or preparing food, cleaning your floors regularly, and dusting with a damp cloth. This is because PCBs may be in dust and soil.

### For more information:

Information for people who catch and eat fish: <http://oehha.ca.gov/fish/pcbs-fish-caught-california>

PCBs in schools and other buildings: <https://www.epa.gov/pcbs/polychlorinated-biphenyls-pcbs-building-materials>