

Phthalates Fact Sheet

Phthalates are added to vinyl to make soft and flexible plastic products, such as shower curtains. Phthalates are also found in scented products, coatings like nail polish and paint, and a variety of other consumer goods.

Phthalates are found in

- Products made from flexible vinyl plastics, sometimes called “PVC” or labeled with the recycling symbol “3”, including:
 - Shower curtains, flooring, and coverings on wires and cables.
 - School lunchboxes, binders, backpacks, modeling clay, and some soft plastic and inflatable toys.
 - Some plastic food packaging and some plastic containers.
 - Tubing and gloves used in food processing and medical care.
- Fragrances in some candles, air fresheners, and personal care products like lotions, perfumes, hair products, and deodorants.
- Some nail polish, paint, floor finishes, caulk, and adhesives.
- Some medications and dietary supplements.

Possible health concerns

Some phthalates:

- Can interfere with the body’s natural hormones.
- Can affect development in the fetus, infants, and children.
- Can decrease fertility.
- May contribute to allergies and asthma.

Possible ways to reduce exposure

- Choose non-plastic alternatives when possible. Otherwise, avoid flexible vinyl plastics, sometimes called “PVC” or labeled with a “3”.
- Eat more fresh food and less processed and packaged food.
- Choose products that do not list “fragrance” on the ingredient label.
- Because phthalates come out of products and collect in dust, wash your hands often, especially before eating or preparing food, clean your floors regularly, and use a damp cloth to dust.

For more information:

National Biomonitoring Program fact sheet on phthalates: http://www.cdc.gov/biomonitoring/Phthalates_FactSheet.html

National Library of Medicine fact sheet on phthalates: http://toxtown.nlm.nih.gov/text_version/chemicals.php?id=24