

Polybrominated Diphenyl Ethers (PBDEs) Fact Sheet

PBDE flame retardants were commonly added to furniture, infant products, and electronics for many years. U.S. production of some PBDE mixtures ended in 2006, and the last PBDE mixture was phased out in 2013. Products made before these phase-outs can still contain PBDEs. These chemicals have spread through the environment and take a long time to break down.

PBDEs are found in

- Polyurethane foam in furniture, pillows, motor vehicle seats, and baby products like changing table pads that were manufactured before 2006.
- Some hard plastic casings for electronics, such as TVs and computers, and some electrical wires and cables manufactured before 2013.
- Some fabric backing used in upholstery and draperies manufactured before 2013.
- Carpet padding made from recycled polyurethane foam.
- Some items made from black recycled plastic, including some children’s toys, hair clips, and cooking utensils.
- Dust in homes, offices, and cars that contain products made with PBDEs.
- Some foods, including fatty fish, some shellfish, high-fat meat and poultry, and egg yolks.

Possible health concerns

- PBDEs:
- May interfere with the body’s natural hormones.
 - May harm the developing fetus and infant, which may include effects on later learning and behavior.
 - May decrease fertility.
 - May increase cancer risk.

Possible ways to reduce exposure

- Because PBDEs can come out of products and collect in dust:
 - Wash your and your child’s hands often, especially before preparing or eating food.
 - Clean your floors regularly, using a wet mop or HEPA vacuum if possible, and use a damp cloth to dust.
 - Replace upholstered furniture that is torn or has crumbling foam.
 - Avoid using carpet padding made from recycled polyurethane foam.
 - Avoid black plastic products whenever possible. Choose materials like wood or stainless steel instead.
 - Include plenty of variety in your diet.
 - Trim off skin from fish and fat from meat, and cook these foods on a rack to let fat drain off.
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