

# Polybrominated Diphenyl Ethers (PBDEs) Fact Sheet

PBDE flame retardants were commonly added to furniture, infant products, and electronics for many years. They have spread through the environment and break down slowly. U.S. production of some widely used PBDEs ended as of 2006, and the last major PBDE mixture is due to be phased out by the end of 2013. The U.S. government is also working to prevent the addition of any PBDEs to new products, including imports, sold in the U.S.

## PBDEs are found in

- Polyurethane foam in furniture, pillows, motor vehicle seats, and baby products, like car seats and changing table pads, especially if manufactured before 2006.
- Some hard plastic casings for electronics, such as TVs and computers; some mattresses, upholstery fabric, draperies, wires, and cables, especially if manufactured before 2013.
- Some carpet padding made from recycled or scrap polyurethane foam.
- Dust in homes, offices, and cars that contain products made with PBDEs.
- Some high-fat foods, like sausages, high-fat cheeses, butter, and fatty fish.

## Possible health concerns

PBDEs:

- May interfere with the body's natural hormones.
- May harm the developing fetus and infant, possibly affecting later learning and behavior.
- May decrease fertility.

## Possible ways to reduce exposure

Reducing exposure to PBDEs is difficult because they have been extensively used in furniture and other products. Actions that may help reduce exposure are listed below.

- Because PBDEs come out of products and collect in dust:
  - Wash your hands often, especially before eating or preparing food.
  - Wash your children's hands often. Infants and toddlers get a lot of dust on their hands when they play or crawl on the floor.
  - Clean your floors regularly and use a damp cloth to dust.
- Replace upholstered furniture that is torn or has crumbling foam.
- Avoid using carpet padding made from recycled or scrap polyurethane foam.
- Include plenty of variety in your diet.