

Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs) Fact Sheet

PCBs were once used in a wide variety of industrial applications, including as insulating fluid in electrical equipment and as plasticizers. PCBs were banned in the late 1970s but are still in some old equipment and products. They can also be unintentionally formed during the production of certain pigments and dyes. PCBs have spread through the environment and take a long time to break down.

PCBs are found in

- Some foods, including:
 - 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 meat, such as high-fat ground beef.
 - Some dairy products, such as milk.
 - Some eggs.
- Some products and building materials made 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.
- Certain pigments and dyes used in paints, paper products, plastics, and other items.

Possible health concerns

PCBs:

- Can harm the developing fetus and infant, which can include effects on growth and learning.
- Can interfere with the body's natural hormones and affect the immune system.
- May decrease fertility.
- Can increase cancer risk.

Possible ways to reduce exposure

- 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.
- Because PCBs may be 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.

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>