



## Furniture

Creating a comfortable and beautiful nursery for your upcoming arrival is part of the fun and excitement of being an expecting mother. Some of your biggest considerations when preparing for baby may be your crib, bassinet, changing table and rocking chair. Furniture and textiles are an important piece to consider when addressing the air quality in our homes.

### What you should know:

Furniture can be made with a whole array of chemicals such as formaldehyde, polyurethane and toxic finishes, all of which give off VOCs. Not only will your children be spending up to 16 hours a day sleeping in their crib, but kids are known to put everything in their mouth when they start teething and that could include their crib!

Our airtight homes, while great for efficiency, do nothing to help circulation and are a huge contributor to poor indoor air quality. The EPA estimates that indoor air quality is somewhere between 2-5 times more polluted than outside air and is listed as one of the top 5 areas of concern. In homes that use air fresheners it is even worse.<sup>1</sup>

Today one out of seven kids has asthma (more than doubled since 1985)<sup>1</sup>. Additionally, the occurrence of chronic disease such as cancer, autism, ADD/ADHD and learning and developmental issues are on the rise at alarming rates. Leading scientists have linked the onslaught and unprecedented rise in chronic disease to many of the chemicals that we are exposed to in our homes.<sup>2</sup>

### Here are some things to avoid:

**VOCs** - Volatile Organic Compounds are chemicals that contaminate our air quality.<sup>3</sup>

**HAP or Hazard Air Pollutants** - Toxic chemicals that may cause reproductive or birth defects and can be found in unregulated furniture stain and glue.

**Formaldehyde** - A HAP found in wood glue and used as preservative. According to the World Health Organization, it is known to cause cancer in humans and is one of the leading components of indoor air pollution.

**Pentachlorophenol** - A preservative used in some plywood manufacturing and a probable human carcinogen.<sup>4</sup>

**Fire Retardant Chemicals such as PBDE or Polybrominated Diphenyl** - The Environmental California Research and Policy Center says that some of the most commonly used fire-retardant compounds are PBDE. According to the ECRPC, exposure to PBDEs may be especially harmful to infants and fetuses. PBDEs have been banned in Europe since 2004, and American women carry 10-70 times more PBDEs in their breast milk, tissue, and blood as Europeans do. Exposure to PBDEs during fetal development can negatively effect brain development.<sup>5</sup>

**Polyurethane stuffing** – foam core used in most stuffed furniture. It contains toluene, which is consistently listed as one of the most toxic chemicals and is known to cause cancer. It also emits VOCs.

Here are some simple things to beware aware of while purchasing new furniture and textiles for your home:

- All “wood” is not created equally. Manufactured MDF, or pressed plywood and particleboard, is held together by glues that give off formaldehyde. Look for Independently certified wood that is formaldehyde free to ensure that it gives off fewer emissions.
- Solid wood should be FSC certified, meaning that it is certified by the Forest Stewardship Council-international, a non-profit group that audits forestry operations and certifies that those products are produced in way that meet 57 different criteria including protection of wildlife and minimal use of chemical pesticides.
- Look for greenguard.org certification that ensures that furniture is lower in toxicity and therefore won't interfere with your indoor air quality.
- If you don't want to go with unfinished woods, look for Non-Toxic, naturally derived and Low-VOC or No-VOC paint alternatives in your finishings.

- Look for Organic fillers in your couch, glider etc. made from organic cotton fill or wool for the core. Make sure that it is covered in organic fabrics that are either untreated or have low impact non-toxic dyes.

### Resources:

<sup>1</sup> Fassa, Lynda and Karp, Harvey M.D., Green Babies, Sage Moms: The Ultimate Guide to Raising Your Organic Baby. Pg. 126.

<sup>2</sup> Gavigan, Christopher, Healthy Child Healthy World: Creating a Cleaner, Greener, Safer Home. Pg. 179.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.epa.gov/iaq/voc.html>

<sup>4</sup> Dolan, Deirdre and Zissu, Alexandra. The Complete Organic Pregnancy. Pg. 118.

<sup>5</sup> Dolan, Deirdre and Zissu, Alexandra. The Complete Organic Pregnancy. Pg. 36.