



Glossary

BPA – Made from polycarbonate, which then leaches the BPA, a hormone disrupting chemical that mimics estrogen and has been associated with problems such as early onset puberty, diminished sperm and hyperactivity.

Formaldehyde – A preservative found in cosmetics, glue, particleboard, and paint and the most common fabric finisher. A known allergen, respiratory and skin irritant¹ and according to the EPA, has been shown to cause cancer in animals and may cause cancer in humans.¹

Parabens (methyl-, propyl-, butyl-, ethyl-, isobutyl) – Banned in Europe, these are the most widely used cosmetic preservatives in the U.S. There is evidence they mimic estrogen and are therefore endocrine disrupters.

Off gassing – The release of chemicals as by-products of toxins.

Organic – Without the use of artificial inputs, such as synthetic pesticides

Polycrominated diphenyl ethers (PDBEs) – Flame-retardants used in many products, including the foam in couches and mattresses. They can cause liver and thyroid damage, hyperactivity and neurobehavioral problems. PDBEs do not bind to the molecules of materials, so it is easy for them to escape into the air in the form of dust. PDBEs have been banned in Europe since 2004, and American women carry 10-70x more PBDEs in their breast milk, tissue, and blood as Europeans do. Exposure to PBDEs during fetal development can negatively effect how the brain develops.²

Phthalates – Chemicals used in beauty products and to make plastic more flexible. They have been found to cause liver cancer in animals and can cause damage to the reproductive systems of fetuses and children. Phthalates are also used as a fixative in fragrances and, as such, are not required to be listed on labels. In 2009, phthalates were banned in children's toys. A 2000 study by the CDC found that 75% of Americans tested had traces of phthalates in their urine.

PVC – Polyvinyl chloride is a widely used hard plastic that is made softer by the addition of phthalates. Vinyl chloride is a known carcinogen that can lead to cancer, endocrine disruption, and immune system damage.²

VOC – Volatile Organic Compounds – Carbon based chemicals that easily evaporate into the air and contaminate it. Australian studies have linked VOCs to asthma. Paint can release VOCs that include benzene, formaldehyde, kerosene, ammonia, and other toxins.

Resources

¹ <http://www.epa.gov/iaq/formalde.html#Health%20Effects>

² Dolan, Deirdre and Zissu, Alexandra, *The Complete Organic Pregnancy*, pg 36