

# Healthy Toys for Safer Child Care

*Chemicals to avoid, safer plastics, and resources for more*



Babies and children are most vulnerable to toxic chemicals because they breathe, eat, and drink more per pound of body weight than adults, and can be affected during important developmental stages. **Children's products can contain harmful chemicals linked to difficulty learning, cancer, infertility and hormone problems.**

As one of the most common toy materials, plastic is convenient, lightweight, and durable, but it can pose environmental and health risks when it is made, used, and discarded, and uses up non-renewable resources.

## What to Avoid:

**Polycarbonate:** Bisphenol A (BPA) is the building block of polycarbonate plastic. It can leach from the plastic, often labeled as number 7 or PC in a recycling logo. Hundreds of studies have found health problems from low-levels of BPA, including prostate and breast cancer, reproductive problems, diabetes, and obesity.

**In New York, it is illegal to sell baby bottles or sippy cups made of BPA.** Most major sport bottle makers no longer use BPA.

✓ **Spot it:** You can still find polycarbonate 'shatterproof' cups, children's tableware, and toys. Items made of BPA will be a very rigid plastic. **If you don't know, don't buy it.**



**Polyvinylchloride (PVC) or Vinyl:** PVC is toxic throughout its entire lifecycle of production, use, and disposal. PVC factories are commonly located in low-income areas, putting residents in danger of water and air pollution.

Chemicals added to PVC like lead and phthalates can also pollute our bodies. Phthalates act like hormones, which can lead to a variety of reproductive problems. In 2008, the US banned six phthalates from children's products, but there are many others, older products may still be for sale and enforcement is weak. **PVC products for adults and older kids can still contain phthalates.**

✓ **Spot it:** soft plastic toys made with PVC, bibs, doll clothes, teethingers, and vinyl fabrics including shirt decals. **All Evenflo, Gerber, and IKEA toys are PVC-free.**



**Flame Retardants:** Toys filled with polyurethane foam or padding often contain chemical flame retardants. Polyurethane foam burns very easily, and manufacturers resort to adding chemicals. The added chemical flame retardants can build up in household dust and our bodies. Over time, this can harm hormone systems, result in developmental delays, or lead to cancer.

✓ **Spot 'em:** padded books, and toys. The polyurethane foam may be listed on the product label, but the chemicals will not.

**CLEAN & HEALTHY  
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## What Can I Do?

- **Remember** what to avoid by saying “7, 6 and 3 are not for me!”
- **Recycle** your 1s, 2s, 4s, and 5s where available.
- **Choose** children’s toys that are labeled “phthalate-free” or “PVC-free.” Better yet, when replacing a plastic toy, choose a non-plastic alternative like wood or cloth. That’s a solution that is better for children AND the environment.
- **Beware of old plastic toys purchased second-hand;** these may contain now-illegal phthalates or lead. Avoid the problem by avoiding plastic!
- **Choose toys without foam filling or padding.** Look for polyester stuffing instead.
- **If you are not sure** whether a product contains BPA, flame retardants or PVC, call the company and ask.



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## Better Plastics



PETE

*Polyethylene terephthalate:* used for soft drink, juice, water, and clear food containers.



HDPE

*High-density polyethylene:* used in milk jugs, opaque plastic like detergent and shampoo bottles, and some bags.



LDPE

*Low-density polyethylene:* used in some plastic bags, plastic wraps, and squeezable food bottles.



PP

*Polypropylene:* used in most disposable food storage containers, margarine tubs, and yogurt containers.



OTHER

**Pay attention!** This catchall category covers many plastics, including *polycarbonate*. Instead, choose *polylactic acid* (PLA), or other bio-based plastic for dinnerware and cutlery.

## For More Information:

- *PVC info:* [www.besafenet.com/pvc](http://www.besafenet.com/pvc)
- *Phthalates info:* [www.ewg.org/key-issues/toxics/phthalates](http://www.ewg.org/key-issues/toxics/phthalates)
- *Bisphenol A info:* [www.ewg.org/research/timeline-bpa-invention-phase-out](http://www.ewg.org/research/timeline-bpa-invention-phase-out)
- *Searchable product database:* [www.healthystuff.org](http://www.healthystuff.org)
- *PVC-Free Guide for Your Home:* [www.chej.org/wp-content/uploads/Documents/PVC/PVC-Guide-1.pdf](http://www.chej.org/wp-content/uploads/Documents/PVC/PVC-Guide-1.pdf)



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