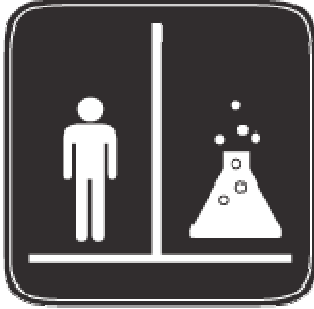


The Truth About Phthalates



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There have recently been reports in the media over certain plastic chemicals called phthalates and their potential impact on human health.

However, much of the information being circulated on the safety of these chemicals is inaccurate. Phthalates are a softening agent used to make plastic pliable and can be found in a variety of consumer goods from toys to garden hoses to vinyl flooring.

But before you begin to rid your home of plastics, here are the facts on safety and risk of phthalates:

MYTH 1:

Phthalates are hazardous to human health

FACT:

After 50 years of use, no reliable evidence has ever shown that phthalates have caused harm to anyone. 1 U.S. government agencies including the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) and the National Toxicology Program (NTP).

American Council on Science and Health (ACSH) convened a Blue Ribbon Panel in 1999 chaired by former Surgeon General C. Everett Koop, which reviewed the scientific literature on phthalate exposure. Dr. Koop concluded that "the panel's findings confirm what the US Food and Drug Administration and the Consumer Product Safety Commission have been saying about these products all along.

There is no scientific evidence that they are harmful to children or adults."

MYTH 2:

All phthalates are Endocrine Disruptors

FACT:

The most widely used phthalates in consumer products, DINP and DIDP, are not endocrine disruptors and have shown no evidence of adverse health effects related to the endocrine system. According to the EU risk assessments, neither substance should be classified as a reproductive toxicant.

MYTH 3:

Evidence of phthalates can be found in humans at toxic levels

FACT:

Studies show that the general population has extremely low levels of phthalates metabolites in their urine. A 2001 report by the CDC showed that the trace levels of phthalates found in humans are well within safety levels and do not pose a health concern.

MYTH 4:**Congress banned phthalates in children's products because they had been proven harmful.****FACT:**

The ban included in the Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act (CPSIA) was a by-product of politics not science. The CPSC rejected a national ban on vinyl toys in 2003, after conducting rigorous studies to determine likely exposure to the phthalate DINP. The report concluded that "for the majority of children, the exposure to DINP from DINP containing toys would be expected to pose a minimal to non-existent risk of injury." Even after the CPSIA was passed the CPSC continued to attest to phthalates' safety. In a recent National Public Radio interview, CPSC scientist Marilyn Wind stated the Commission was opposed to the ban because "there was not a risk of injury to children."

MYTH 5:**Peer reviewed studies show that phthalates are harmful.****FACT:**

The studies frequently cited which claim phthalates are harmful are not based on risk assessments. They seek to establish cause and effect where there is no basis for the claim. One of the most vocal scientists against phthalate research observed variations in reproductive development in infant boys seeking a correlation to mothers' exposure to phthalates.

However, Swan's research has not been reproduced by other researchers and her conclusions have been called into question. It should also be noted that the results of these studies were not deemed useful in scientific risk assessments by the independent scientific community.

MYTH 6: We would be safer with a national ban on phthalates.**FACT:**

While phthalates have been extensively risk assessed by several government panels, the effects of the alternative plasticizers have yet to be studied by a U.S. government agency. The CPSC also warned against the removal of phthalates from products claiming that "If DINP is to be replaced in children's products the potential risks of substitutes must be considered. Weaker or more brittle plastics might break and result in a choking hazard."

This information was found online at:

www.acsh.org/healthissues/newsID.1838/healthissue_detail.asp