

Shopper's Guide to Toxic-Free Kids

Plastic products, toys, and food packaging are everywhere, and are a part of our everyday lives. Unfortunately, many plastic products contain harmful chemicals. We are only beginning to understand the health threats, especially to babies and young children. While everyone should be mindful about their own exposure to these chemicals, it is particularly important that parents, grandparents, and others taking care of young children are aware of the need to limit children's exposure to toxic chemicals. A few small, easy changes in how you store and heat foods and what toys your child plays with can reduce exposure to toxic chemicals that pose risks to child development. Use these simple guidelines to help you choose what to buy, use, or give to children.

Soft plastics and phthalates: PVC plastics—those pliable, gummy-like plastics—are laden with phthalates, chemicals that have been linked to premature birth, reproductive defects, early onset of puberty in girls, and reduced sperm quality in adult males. PVC is used in everything from home building materials to food packaging to children's toys. Phthalates can leach out of these products, which is particularly concerning for children who explore the world by putting things in their mouths. While many manufacturers have removed phthalates from toys and other products intended for very young children, there is no law requiring this and very few products are labeled as such.

Hard plastics and bisphenol A:

Polycarbonate plastic, which is hard, shatter resistant, and often clear in color, contains bisphenol A, a hormone-disrupting chemical linked to Down's syndrome, early onset of puberty, obesity, hyperactivity, and breast and prostate cancer. Almost all plastic baby bottles are made from polycarbonate plastic, as well as popular reusable water bottles (like some Nalgene brand bottles) and large water cooler jugs. In addition, a resin made with bisphenol A coats the inside of aluminum and tin food cans. Bisphenol A leaches readily into food and liquids. There is no law prohibiting its use, and currently, very few manufacturers have taken any action to stop using polycarbonate plastic in their products.



Cut, fold along dotted lines and keep in your wallet.

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- Food containers with polycarbonate plastic: Avoid #7 recycling code and those with a "PC" on the bottom/underside of the product
- Canned foods
- Foods wrapped in plastic
- Plastic baby bottles

Choosing Safer Products

- Look for "PVC Free" labels on toys
- Choose wood toys
- Choose plastic food containers labeled with #1, #2, or #5 recycling code on the bottom, though you still should not heat food in these plastic containers.
- Opt for glass: For baby bottles and food containers, look for glass options rather than plastics or cans. Heat food in glass containers.
- Buy ceramic, metal, or enamel plates and feeding utensils

If You Use Plastic Toys or Containers

- Don't let children put plastic toys in their mouths
- Never heat food or beverages in plastic bottles or containers
- Don't let milk sit in plastic baby bottles for long periods
- Don't use harsh detergents or hot water when washing plastic baby bottles or containers. Never put in dishwasher
- Throw away plastic bottles that look scratched or hazy

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