

What's in the toy box?



We tested 1,200 toys
& other products to find out.

www.HealthyToys.org



After testing toys and other children's products, the Washington Toxics Coalition and the Toxic-Free Legacy Coalition, together with the Michigan-based Ecology Center and environmental health organizations across the country, have created an online database to show the extent of the problem of toxic ingredients and provide guidance for parents wishing to purchase less toxic toys. **What we found was eye-opening.**

We found...

Lead is commonly present in toys.

- Lead is used in a significant percentage of children's toys:** Lead was detected in 35% of the approximately 1,200 products we tested. Seventeen percent (17%) of the products had levels of lead above the 600 parts per million (ppm) federal recall standard used for lead paint! Recently the American Academy of Pediatrics recommended that children's products not contain more than 40ppm lead.
- Very high levels of lead were found in a number of products:** Our testing detected more than 6,700 ppm in Dollar Store animal figurines, 3,056 ppm in a Hannah Montana card pack, 1,931 ppm lead in a Toys R Us Geoffrey Brand doll, 5,197 ppm lead in children's shoes, and 7,132 ppm lead in a child's backpack.

It's not just lead.

Other dangerous chemicals were found in toys. Of those toys tested for other chemicals (some were only tested for lead), we found **cadmium** at levels greater than 100 ppm in 2.9% of products. **Arsenic** was detected at levels greater than 100 ppm in 2.2% of products tested. **Mercury** was found above 100 ppm in 0.6% of the total products tested.

Many plastic toys are made of PVC.

Nearly 50% of toys (excluding jewelry) tested were made of polyvinyl chloride (PVC) plastic, including balls, bath toys, dolls, play food, animal figurines, costume elements, backpacks, and lunchboxes. PVC is generally considered the most hazardous plastic because it creates hazards in its manufacture and disposal, and contains additives that are dangerous to human health.

Safe toys are possible.

Some manufacturers are already making safe toys: Many of the products we tested did not contain any lead, cadmium, arsenic, mercury or PVC, including many made in China. These results show that manufacturers can make toys free of unnecessary toxic chemicals.



This is an example of a safe toy we found.

Go to www.HealthyToys.org to search the toy database



You can search for toys by name, brand, and type. Each toy is given a rating for five elements that represent the presence of chemicals of concern. Those elements are lead, mercury, cadmium, chlorine and arsenic. Products were assigned a low, medium or high level to indicate the relative level of a chemical in a product.

Children and toxic chemicals don't mix.

Plastics, paints, fabrics and other materials used in toys contain chemicals that give the toys rigidity, durability, flame resistance, or other desirable properties. These chemicals have also been linked to long-term health impacts such as birth defects, impaired learning, liver toxicity, and cancer.

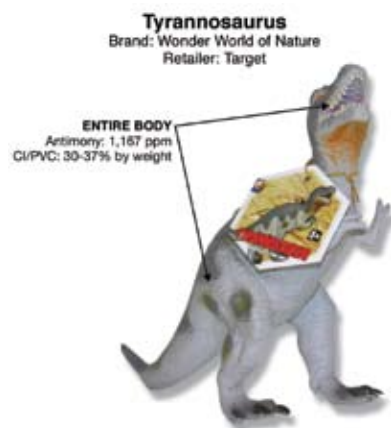
The fact that we found high levels of toxic chemicals in toys and other products that children come into contact with multiple times a day is troubling and unacceptable.

- **Because children's bodies are growing and developing, they are especially vulnerable to the effects of toxic chemicals.**

- **Even small amounts of a chemical can impact a child's ability to reach his or her full potential. For example, there is no safe level of lead for a child—the smallest amount can cause a drop in IQ points.**

When children put these products in their mouths, the chemicals can enter their bodies through contact with saliva. Some of the product ingredients, which are not always chemically bound to the products, can also be released directly into the air that children breathe, or the dust in their homes. Children are exposed to toxic chemicals from many sources in addition to toys, and the combination of these many exposures may lead to harm.

Examples of products we found containing toxic chemicals.



The Chemicals in Toys

While there are numerous chemical compounds in toys that may lead to health and environmental problems, we focused on several chemicals that were found most frequently and at significant levels.

Lead

- Lead is a heavy metal that is used in a wide variety of children's products.
- Scientists have found there is no safe level of lead for children—even the smallest amount affects children's ability to learn (Lanphear 2005, Gilbert 2006).
- Lead impacts brain development, causing learning and developmental problems, including decreased IQ scores, shorter attention spans, and delayed learning (Gilbert 2004).

Cadmium

- Cadmium is a heavy metal that is found in a variety of children's products.
- Cadmium is associated with developmental effects, including possible decreases in birth weight, delayed sensory-motor development, hormonal effects, and altered behavior (EWG 2007, Schantz 2001).
- It is a known carcinogen, associated with lung and prostate cancer and can result in bone loss and increased blood pressure (Huff 2007).

Phthalates

- Phthalates are used in many plastics, especially PVC products, as a softening agent to make the plastic flexible.
- Phthalates are a group of chemicals, some of which can disturb normal hormonal processes, often at low levels of exposure (IEPA 2000).
- Exposure to phthalates is linked to birth defects of the genitals and altered levels of reproductive hormones in baby boys. An increased breast cancer risk is also suspected (Main 2006, Swan 2005, Marsee 2006).

Toxic Tin Compounds

- Organotin are used as stabilizers in PVC products, particularly in rigid PVC products (Modern Plastics Handbook 2000).
- Several tin compounds cause nervous system harm, including tributyl tin, dibutyl tin, trimethyltin, and dimethyltin (Cooke 2004, Jenkins 2004). The developing brain is particularly vulnerable.
- Some forms of organotin, like tributyl tin and dibutyltin, are also toxic to the immune system (Cooke 2004).

Getting the Toxics Out of the Toybox

No one is minding the store to ensure that only the safest chemicals and materials are used in toys and other children's products. The recent recall of millions of lead laden toys is merely a symptom of the larger problem.

- Very few chemicals are banned from use even when there is overwhelming scientific evidence of serious health and environmental threats.
- Toxic chemicals are not tested for safety before they are put into everyday consumer products.
- Companies don't tell consumers or the government what toxic chemicals are used in their products.

What Washington Leaders Can Do

States can lead the way, as they have on other issues, from banning mercury and toxic flame retardants to adopting clean car standards. Washington state has demonstrated this leadership in the past and can do so once again by adopting a comprehensive approach to the problem.

The Washington state legislature should adopt legislation that:

- **Prohibits the use of dangerous chemicals in toys and other children's products.** Known toxics such as lead, cadmium, and phthalates should be kept out of toys, and only the safest chemicals and materials should be used.
- **Provides consumers with useful information to make safer buying choices.** Manufacturers of toys and children's products should be required to test and disclose the chemical contents of their products.
- **Makes manufacturers responsible for moving toward safer products.** Manufacturers should replace toxic ingredients with safer substitutes.

What You Can Do

Join Our Action Alert Network: Get notified about the most urgent actions you can take to eliminate toxic toys.

Go to www.nomoretoxictoy.org and click on the link "Get Email Updates" at the bottom of the page.

Want to Get More Involved? Contact Jim Dawson at 360-292-8540 or jdawson@watoxics.org to learn about current actions you can take in your community to eliminate toxic toys.

HealthyToys.org was developed by the Ecology Center in collaboration with Washington Toxics Coalition.

Other state and regional partners, include:

- * Alliance for a Clean and Healthy Maine
- * Center for Environmental Health — California
- * Clean Water Action — New England
- * Coalition for a Safe and Healthy Connecticut
- * Massachusetts Alliance for a Healthy Tomorrow
- * Maine Environmental Health Strategy Center
- * Michigan Network for Children's Environmental Health
- * Minnesota Healthy Legacy
- * New York JustGreen Partnership
- * The Center for Health, Environment, and Justice
- * The Toxic-Free Legacy Coalition — Washington State

For a list of references for this fact sheet visit www.toxicfreelegacy.org/healthytoys/

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www.watoxics.org

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