

Bisphenols & Phthalates

Why do I keep hearing so much about BPA and phthalates? What are these things and how do they affect my family? And if they really are such a big problem, is there anything I can do to keep my family from being exposed to them?

What are bisphenols and phthalates?

Bisphenols, like bisphenol A, S or F (or BPA, BPS, BPF for short), are chemicals used to harden plastic. They are found in many things we use every day, including:

- children's teething toys
- plastic containers
- cash-register receipts
- in the lining of food and soda cans

Phthalates are chemicals used to make plastic more flexible and to make fragrances last longer. Some things they are found in include:

- personal-care products (nail polish, aftershave lotion, shampoos, perfumes)
- toys
- flexible PVC pipes
- vinyl flooring

Why are they dangerous? Exposure to bisphenols and phthalates can be harmful, especially for fetuses and young children. They migrate out of plastic into air, food and water. We breathe and consume these chemicals in our food and water, or absorb them through our skin. Bisphenols and phthalates can mimic or block hormones – the chemical messengers that help our bodies function properly – causing health problems.

Health problems linked to BPA include:

- Problems with the development of the brain and nervous system like hyperactivity, anxiety, & depression
- Decreased fertility
- Heart disease
- Obesity
- Type 2 Diabetes

Health problems linked to phthalates include:

- Increased allergies and asthma
- Harm to reproductive development in boys
- Decreased fertility

Many of these problems start with exposures in the womb or during early childhood.

What can be done to avoid these chemicals? Here are some tips to avoid exposure to bisphenols and phthalates:

- 1) Don't use plastic containers for **hot food or drinks**, or for **microwaving**. Use glass containers if you can!
- 2) Store food in glass, lead-free ceramic, or stainless steel.
- 3) Use a stainless steel water bottle or sippy cup instead of plastic water bottles or cups.
- 4) Avoid plastics marked with **recycle codes 3, 6, or 7**; these may be made with bisphenols and/or phthalates. Choose plastics with **codes 1, 2, 4, or 5** if you need to use plastic.

¡Seleccione productos plásticos más seguros:¹



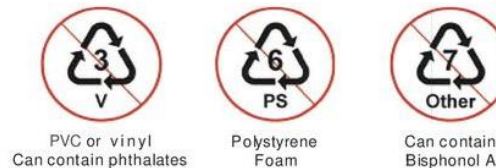
Plásticos que hay que evitar:^{2,3,4}



Choose safer plastics:¹



Plastics to avoid:^{2,3}



- 5) Encourage frequent handwashing
- 6) Eat more fresh food and less canned or packaged food.
- 7) Wash hands after touching cash-register receipts and electronics, or just say “no thanks” to receipts or ask for them by email.
- 8) Select products **WITHOUT** “fragrance”, “perfume”, or “parfum” on the ingredient label.
- 9) To reduce exposure to contaminated dust, use a vacuum cleaner with a HEPA filter, clean household surfaces with a damp cloth, and **wash hands, especially before eating**.

Water bottles or other plastic products labeled as “BPA-Free” often contain bisphenol S or bisphenol F; but these BPA-substitutes may actually be just as harmful as BPA. The phthalate market has followed a similar pattern of “regrettable substitution” in which one phthalate – which is known to be harmful – is replaced by another potentially-just-as-dangerous phthalate. This new substitute stays on the market until research shows that it is dangerous, too.

It is important to be aware of the chemicals in the products we buy and use every day. If we, as a community, avoid buying products made with these harmful chemicals, then manufacturers will create more products that are healthier for the environment and our children.

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Resources

[CONSUMER GUIDE: Phthalates and Bisphenol A](#)

https://www.pehsu.net/Library/facts/bpapatients_factsheet03-2014.pdf

[Phthalates and Bisphenol A Advisory \(Spanish\)](#)

https://www.pehsu.net/Library/facts/patient_bpa_spanish_final.pdf

[Tip Sheet: 6 Simple Steps to Avoid BPA and Phthalates in Food](#)

https://silentspring.org/sites/default/files/six_steps.pdf

Phthalate-Safe Cosmetics

<http://www.safecosmetics.org/get-the-facts/chemicals-of-concern/phthalates/>

[Phthalates - Proposition 65 Warnings Website](#)

<https://www.p65warnings.ca.gov/fact-sheets/phthalates>