

Flame Retardants

Why we care

If you own upholstered furniture, foam products for babies, carpet padding, or electronics, you are likely being exposed to flame retardants. Many flame retardant chemicals, such as PBDEs, are persistent, bioaccumulative, and toxic to humans and the environment. They are absorbed through skin contact, outgassing, and dust, and have been found in breast milk. Toddlers have levels three to four times those of their mothers, and early exposure can increase the risk of learning and behavior disabilities. Research also shows that while flame retardants reduce ignition time by seconds, they greatly increase toxic gases. And, declining rates of fire deaths are attributed to reduced rates of smoking and code-required use of smoke detectors more than to flame retardants.

Simple, positive steps

- Select furniture with natural latex foam, or purchase from a company which can confirm it has no flame retardants. Furniture with a CA 117 tag meets California flammability standards and *does* contain flame retardants.
- Use a vacuum with a HEPA filter. Open windows and doors while you clean. Wash hands after dusting and cleaning.
- Buy wool carpeting. It has a formation that traps dust between vacuums.
- Don't let kids jump on furniture.
- Foam products purchased after 2005 no longer contain the most common PBDE, but its chemical replacements are still risky to health.
- Replace foam products that are deteriorating, and dispose of them at one of Metro's hazardous waste sites.
- Reduce consumption of fatty meats. PBDEs concentrate in the fat of animals.

Questions or feedback? Contact Jeanne Roy at jeanne@earthleaders.org.

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