



## Eco-Healthy Child Care



Eco-Healthy Child Care is a national program created by the Oregon Environmental Council to ensure that child care settings are as healthy, safe and green as possible by reducing children's exposure to toxins.

## Plastics & Plastic Toys

Certain plastics are known to contain toxins which have negative impacts on human health. Children are particularly vulnerable to toxins since their immune systems and organs are still developing. Young children are also at greater risk since they often insert plastic objects into their mouths. Baby bottles, sippy cups, teething rings, and toys are often made with phthalates and Bisphenol A (BPA). These two toxic ingredients in plastics are of particular concern, as research increasingly shows that these chemicals mimic hormones and disrupt normal development and growth.

### **Phthalates** (pronounced THAL-ates)

Phthalates are a class of chemicals that are used to soften PVC-containing (vinyl) plastics, bind fragrances in products, and act as solvents and fixatives. Adverse health effects include hormone disruption, developmental and reproductive problems, asthma, preterm birth, low sperm count, undescended testes, premature puberty, and development of some cancers.

### **Bisphenol A (BPA)**

Bisphenol A is a hormone disrupter that is used to make polycarbonate plastic (hard clear plastic). Bisphenol A can be found in baby bottles, water bottles, canned food liners, and sippy cups. Adverse health effects include prostate

cancer, breast cancer, miscarriages, birth defects, early puberty, low sperm count, hyperactivity and aggressiveness.

### **Plastics to Avoid: #3, #6, and #7**

#### **#3 – Polyvinyl Chloride (PVC)**

PVC often contains lead and phthalates, and the production of PVC releases cancer-causing dioxins into the environment.

*Products:* Flexible plastic toys (rubber ducky, dolls, beach balls), inflatable swimming pools, garden hoses, cosmetics, shower curtains, crib bumpers, imitation leather, and food packaging.

*Health Concerns:* Cancer, birth defects, reproductive and developmental disorders, low sperm count, undescended testes, premature puberty, and liver dysfunction.

#### **#6 – Polystyrene (PS, commonly known as Styrofoam)**

Toxic styrene can leach from polystyrene plastic.

*Products:* Coffee cups, carry-out containers, packaging “peanuts”, food trays, disposable cutlery, toys, and packaging for meats, cheeses, fish, and yogurt.

*Health Concerns:* Suspected carcinogen and neurotoxin.

## #7 – Other (usually polycarbonate)

Bisphenol A (BPA) can leach from polycarbonate plastic and act as a hormone disrupter.

*Products:* Hard, clear baby bottles, water bottles, and sippy cups; canned food liners.

*Health Concerns:* Prostate cancer, breast cancer, miscarriages, birth defects, premature puberty, low sperm count, hyperactivity, and aggressiveness.

### Seven Tips for Safer Use of Plastics:

1. **Avoid plastics with recycling code #3, #6, and #7.**
2. **Do not heat or microwave food in plastic containers,** as leaching of toxic chemicals from plastic to food or liquid may occur.
3. **Use PVC-free plastic wrap** (buy plastic wrap and bags made with polyethylene).
4. **Minimize the use of canned foods and canned drinks** as many are lined with BPA.
5. **Choose phthalate-free toys.** Look for toys labeled “phthalate-free” or “PVC-

free”. Choose toys made from polypropylene or polyethylene, or avoid plastic toys altogether.

6. **Purchase phthalate-free beauty products.**
7. **Ask your dentist for BPA-free sealants and composite fillings.**

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

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**Visit: [www.oeconline.org/ehcc](http://www.oeconline.org/ehcc)**

### Plastic Resources on the Internet

- Plastic Containers

[www.thegreenguide.com/products/Kitchen/Plastic\\_Containers](http://www.thegreenguide.com/products/Kitchen/Plastic_Containers)

- Smart Plastics Guide for Parents and Children

[www.healthobservatory.org/library.cfm?refid=77083](http://www.healthobservatory.org/library.cfm?refid=77083)

- Adverse Health Effects of Plastics

[www.ecologycenter.org/factsheets/plasticealtheffects.html](http://www.ecologycenter.org/factsheets/plasticealtheffects.html)

- Styrene

[www.atsdr.cdc.gov/tfacts53.html](http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/tfacts53.html)

- Articles about Plastics

[www.chechnet.org/healthhouse/education/articles-detail2.asp?Main\\_Article\\_Primary=Plastic](http://www.chechnet.org/healthhouse/education/articles-detail2.asp?Main_Article_Primary=Plastic)

- Plastics that May be Harmful to Children and Reproductive Health

[www.ehhi.org/reports/plastics/ehhi\\_plastics\\_report\\_2008.pdf](http://www.ehhi.org/reports/plastics/ehhi_plastics_report_2008.pdf)

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