



PHTHALATES

WHAT ARE PHTHALATES?

Phthalates (pronounced THAL-eights) are a group of chemicals used to make products more flexible and durable. There are 12 billion pounds of phthalates produced worldwide each year!

Phthalates are present in thousands of products, including plastic toys for children, teething rings for toddlers, medical devices, food packaging, building materials, household cleaning products, and even in personal care products such as nail polish to prevent cracking and in shampoos and soaps to preserve fragrances.

People are mostly exposed to phthalates by eating and drinking foods that have been in contact with containers and products containing phthalates.

CONCERNS FOR OUR COMMUNITIES

U.S. government data shows that exposure to phthalates is significantly higher in children and in people of color.

Dollar store products, which are marketed towards low-income communities, have been found to contain phthalates at alarmingly high levels.

Phthalates are widely used chemicals throughout the U.S. food system and can enter into food at any point in food processing, packaging, and/or preparation.

Environmental justice communities experience food insecurity, have less access to fresh and nutritious foods, and therefore rely on more processed and packaged foods that have higher levels of phthalates.

It is unjust that environmental justice communities, especially particularly sensitive populations such as pregnant women and children, continue to be exposed to toxic phthalates despite their known health concerns.





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HEALTH RISKS

Elevated phthalate exposure has been found to:

- Interfere with the reproductive functions of both men (e.g., infertility) and women (e.g., breast cancer);
- Impede brain development in children, such as ADHD, neurodevelopmental issues, behavioral issues, and autism; and
- Cause obesity and type II diabetes.

HOW TO LIMIT YOUR EXPOSURE TO PHTHALATES

Replace plastic-wrapped foods with fresh foods as often as possible; if you must wrap food, use butcher paper, waxed paper, or paper towels.

Store food and drinks in glass, stainless steel, or ceramic containers instead of in plastic containers.

Never reheat foods in plastic; high heat can allow phthalates and other chemicals to leach into food.

Avoid household or personal care products that contain “fragrance” or “parfum.”

Avoid purchasing plastic items made of polyvinyl chloride (PVC).

Support legislation that will decrease the use of phthalates in everyday products.

WHAT IS WE ACT DOING?

It is crucial that we work on banning all phthalates chemicals in the United States. WE ACT is active in the Coalition for Safer Food Processing and Packaging, aka the “Food Fight!” campaign. We collaborate with the coalition to persuade KraftHeinz (and other processed food manufacturers) to investigate and eliminate the sources of phthalates in their food products.