

Protecting Our Children's Health From Toxic Chemicals



Governor Inslee is proposing a comprehensive toxics reduction initiative to deal with toxic chemicals entering the environment from everyday sources. This is important because:

Toxic chemicals in everyday life can harm our children

- Many serious childhood conditions are on the rise: autism, asthma, abnormal reproductive development, behavioral problems, learning disabilities, and obesity.
- There's sufficient and growing scientific evidence that toxic chemicals can contribute to these conditions. For example:
 - Exposure to lead, PCBs, methylmercury, and PBDE flame retardants can alter brain development resulting in lower IQ, learning and behavioral disabilities, and memory problems.
 - Indoor air pollutants such as formaldehyde, solvents, and pesticides can trigger asthma.
 - New evidence suggests that fetal exposure to nicotine, as well as to other chemicals found in everyday items like some nonstick cookware or waterproof fabrics, can promote obesity later in life.

Consumers need help to avoid chemicals

- Chemicals in products can escape during production and everyday use.
- People are exposed without their consent or knowledge. These chemicals are invisible to consumers and are often not disclosed on labels.
- These chemicals can make their way into our bodies. Ongoing studies by the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) find many of these chemicals in U.S. adults and children. (www.cdc.gov/exposurereport/)
- Businesses, healthcare providers, universities, and governments must work together to identify harmful chemicals and find safer alternatives.

“Children are exquisitely sensitive to environmental exposures during development. Even ‘low level’ environmental exposures can impact healthy normal development, including learning and memory processes. Health research has measured disproportionate impacts to socially disadvantaged populations.”

- Elaine M. Faustman, PhD, DABT
Professor and Director at UW
Center for Children's
Environmental Health Risks
Research, School of Public Health

“Endocrine disrupting chemicals can affect the developing fetus at very small doses, leading to a lifetime of health impacts. For example, phthalate exposure in pregnancy is now related to neurobehavioral changes like reduced IQ and increased hyperactivity as in ADHD and with altered genital development in male children.”

- Sheela Sathyanarayana, MD, MPH
Investigator at Seattle Children's
Research Institute. Associate
Professor, UW Dept of Pediatrics



*All children deserve a
healthy start in life!*

Prevention is the best approach

- Reducing harmful exposures in early life can help prevent health problems later.
- Prevention is part of basic public health practice. Many disabilities and conditions associated with chemical exposure are chronic and have no cure.
- We have a responsibility to protect the health of our children.

Inaction has a cost

- Taxpayers and families already pay healthcare and added education costs brought about by health conditions caused by chemical pollution.
- Health researchers in New York estimated the annual U.S. cost of childhood lead and methylmercury poisoning, together with childhood cancers, asthma, and developmental disabilities attributable to environmental factors were between \$59.8 billion - \$105.8 billion, and constituted about 3.5 percent of all U.S. healthcare costs in 2008. (Trasande and Liu, Health Affairs 2011; Vol 30(5):863-870)

“As a pediatrician, I see sick children who need medication to get well. But they also need an environment that fosters their health. For children with asthma, reducing triggers like household cleaners, consumer products, and other indoor triggers can have an impact that is comparable to use of mainstay medications.”

- Catherine Karr, MD, PhD
Associate Professor and Director,
UW Pediatric Environmental
Health Specialty Unit

More Information

Department of Health, Environmental Chemicals
and Children
doh.wa.gov/chemicalsandchildren

Department of Health, Biomonitoring
doh.wa.gov/biomonitoring

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National
Report on Human Exposure to Environmental Chemicals
cdc.gov/exposurereport

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The Governor's Toxics Reduction Initiative

The toxics reduction initiative will allow Washington to address the most problematic chemicals, find safer alternatives when possible, and devote more resources to preventing pollution and monitoring the health of our environment.

This approach builds on Washington's well-established system for developing chemical action plans, and will bring together stakeholders to recommend actions to reduce or eliminate use of priority toxic chemicals.