

# The 5 most wanted toxic chemicals



## Flame retardants



Flame retardants are chemicals used in plastics and textiles that inhibit or resist the spread of fire.

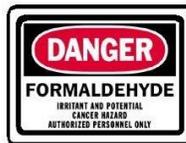
Recent health studies in humans suggest that flame retardants can cause lower IQ's, reduced fertility and hormonal changes in humans.

### Where are they found?

They are used in a wide variety of consumer products such as children's toys, in plastics such as electronic control units, and in polyurethane foam used in furniture.

They are also present in resins, fabric backings and in baby products such as car seats, changing mats and strollers.

## Formaldehyde



Formaldehyde is an industrial chemical that can exist in liquid form (formol) or solid form (paraformaldehyde). It is used to manufacture various consumer products.

Short-term exposure to formaldehyde can cause irritation to eyes, nose, throat and skin; it can

cause coughing and other symptoms such as nausea. Long-term exposure to formaldehyde can cause several types of cancers, including cancer of the nasal passages, throat cancer and leukemia.

### Where is it found?

It is present in various consumer products such as furniture, cleaning products, paints, textiles, pesticides, medications and personal care products.

More precisely formaldehyde can be found in antiseptics, cosmetics, nail polish, dishwasher detergent, fabrics and fabric softeners, carpet cleaners, wallpaper, glues and adhesives, coatings and plastics.

Formaldehyde is also released into the air by the use of certain building materials such as: binders, resins and composite wood products. These materials are used to make carpets, furniture, cabinets, insulation and paneling.

Finally, formaldehyde is released when there is combustion. It can then be present in the air during fires, by car exhaust and cigarette smoke. Formaldehyde can react with other chemicals in the atmosphere and create carbon monoxide which contributes to smog formation.

### Parabens



Parabens are antibacterial agents used as preservatives in food, drugs, cosmetics and personal care products.

Parabens mimic the hormone estrogen, which can lead to an increased risk of breast cancer. Parabens can also affect male reproductive functions. They are also toxic to the immune system and organs and can lead to skin disease.

### Where are they found?

Parabens are found in a number of products including shampoos, moisturizing creams, shaving creams, cleaning gels, personal lubricants, deodorant and toothpaste.

### Phthalates



Phthalates are a group of synthetic chemicals that are widely used as additives in plastics.

The various health problems associated with phthalates are: asthma and allergies, miscarriage and reproductive disorders in men.

### Where are they found?

Phthalates are found in high concentrations in personal hygiene products where they are used to hold color. As well in denature alcohol (to make alcohol improper for consumption), as a lubricant and to prolong the scent of perfume.

Phthalates are also found in heavily scented products such as shampoos, lotions and perfumes. They are also used in food packaging.

### Triclosan



Triclosan is an antibacterial agent which is widely used in many disinfectants.

Triclosan can cause allergies and asthma by weakening the immune system. It also disrupts the hormonal system. Triclosan can accumulate in our bodies and belongs to a class of chemicals that are suspected of causing cancer.

Studies have shown that when triclosan is exposed to sunlight in water, it breaks down into dioxins which are toxic to humans and the environment. Triclosan may also react with other chemicals in treated water to produce chloroform which is a carcinogen.

Several researchers are also concerned about the relationship between these antibacterial agents and their contribution to the growth of antibiotic-resistant bacteria. In fact, these "superbugs" can cause serious health problems because of their resistance to antibiotics.

### Where is it found?

Triclosan is found in disinfectants, hand soaps, toothpaste and mouthwash, deodorants, cosmetics, fabrics, plastics and other products.