

# Shop safer—skip the toxics!

A closer look at harmful chemicals in everyday items.

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## Drink & Food Cans

### Harmful chemicals in canned goods

Bisphenols are used **in the lining of** food and drink cans, like soup and soda cans. The lining can help protect the can and the food or drink inside, and can prevent the can from rusting.

### Hazards and negative health effects

Bisphenols are chemicals that **can interfere with the body's hormone system**. They may cause problems with fertility in men and women, affect the thyroid, and lead to other hormone-related issues in the body.

### What we're doing to support safer products

**Safer Products for Washington** restricts bisphenols in drink cans because safer alternatives are available. These alternatives allow companies to sell the same products without using harmful chemicals. We also require reporting for bisphenols in food cans to help us learn more.

## Jewelry

### Harmful chemicals in jewelry

**Lead** and **cadmium** are sometimes found in jewelry because they **cost less**, are **easy to shape** and **join pieces together, look shiny, and make jewelry more durable and feel heavier**. Shiny, light-weight jewelry may appeal to children, while heavier jewelry is often preferred by adults.

### Hazards and negative health effects

**Lead:** Any amount of lead is toxic. Exposure over time can cause brain damage, developmental delays in children, high blood pressure, kidney damage, and more.

**Cadmium:** Cadmium is toxic if swallowed or absorbed through the skin. Long-term exposure can cause kidney damage, bone loss, and even cancer.

Children are especially susceptible because they put jewelry in their mouths, and lead can harm their developing brains.

### What we're doing to support safer products

Washington's **Children's Safe Products Act** already limits how much lead and cadmium can be in children's jewelry.

**Safer Products for Washington** is reviewing lead and cadmium in jewelry to see if stronger regulations are needed—especially since safer alternatives might be available and could be used instead.

## Carpets & Rugs

### Harmful chemicals in carpets and rugs

**Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl substances**, also known as “**PFAS**,” are a group of chemicals used in many products to make them water-resistant.

**PFAS** are often called “**forever chemicals**” because they don’t break down easily. They stay in the environment and can build up in people and animals over time.

### Hazards and negative health effects

People can be exposed to PFAS from carpets and rugs, especially through **long-term contact** with **skin** or by **breathing in dust**.

**Over time**, PFAS can build up in the body. Exposure has been linked to cancer, harm to the immune system, and developmental problems.

### What we’re doing to support safer products

Under the **Safer Products for Washington** law, carpets and rugs that contain PFAS are restricted from being sold or distributed because safer alternatives exist. This means products sold in Washington or online into Washington **should not** contain these harmful chemicals.

## Hair Softeners & Straighteners

### Harmful chemicals in hair softeners and releasers

**Formaldehyde** is sometimes found in hair softeners and hair straightening products. It is used to relax hair and can also help **extend a product’s shelf-life** and prevent the growth of bacteria in a product.

### Hazards and negative health effects

Salon workers, salon owners, and people who use these products—especially women—may be exposed through **skin contact** or by **breathing it in**.

**Long-term exposure** to formaldehyde can cause eye and skin irritation, increase the risk of asthma and cancer, and harm brain function.

## What we're doing to support safer products

Under the **Toxic-Free Cosmetics Act**, products that intentionally add formaldehyde are currently restricted. We're also working on new rules that assess products that release formaldehyde over time.

## Eyeshadow

### Harmful chemicals in eyeshadow

**Lead** can be found in some pigments and is sometimes added to make colors more vibrant.

### Hazards and negative health effects

People who use these products—whether for cosmetic or cultural reasons—may be exposed to lead through **skin contact** or **breathing it in during use**.

Lead is toxic in any amount. **Gradual, long-term exposure** to lead can harm the brain, kidneys, and reproductive system. Infants and children are particularly sensitive, as lead can affect their brain development.

## What we're doing to support safer products

Under the **Toxic-Free Cosmetics Act**, lead is restricted in eyeshadow. Ecology is currently reviewing whether limits on lead need to be updated through additional rulemaking.

## Fragrances

### Harmful chemicals in fragrances

**Ortho-phthalates** can help stabilize and enhance scents, allowing them to last longer.

### Hazards and negative health effects

People who use these products—whether for personal or cultural reasons—may be exposed to ortho-phthalates through **skin contact** or **breathing it in during use**.

Ortho-phthalates can **disrupt hormonal balance** and may cause harm to the brain and reproductive system.

## What we're doing to support safer products

**Safer Products for Washington** restricts phthalates in fragrances used in personal care products because safer alternatives are available. These alternatives allow companies to sell beauty and personal care products without using these harmful chemicals.

## Vinyl Flooring

### Harmful chemicals in vinyl flooring

**Ortho-phthalates** are a type of plasticizer that helps enhance the flexibility and durability of materials.

### Hazards and negative health effects

People, especially children, are exposed through **inhaling indoor air** and **ingesting dust** that accumulates as flooring degrades.

Ortho-phthalates can **disrupt hormonal balance** and may cause harm to the brain and reproductive system.

### What we're doing to support safer products

**Safer Products for Washington** restricts phthalates in vinyl flooring because safer alternatives are available. These alternatives allow flooring products to be sold and distributed in Washington without the use of these harmful chemicals.

## TVs & Displays

### Harmful chemicals in TVs and displays

**Organohalogen flame retardants** (OFRs) are a class of chemicals used to meet fire safety standards in TVs, displays, and many other products.

### Hazards and negative health effects

People can **breathe in** or **ingest contaminated dust** that builds up as products break down over time. Exposure can also occur through **skin contact** or by **eating contaminated food**, such as fish exposed to organohalogen released from discarded products in landfills.

Organohalogen can build up in the body over time. **Gradual, long-term exposure** may disrupt hormonal balance, increase the risk of cancer, and harm the brain and reproductive system.

### What we're doing to support safer products

**Safer Products for Washington** restricts OFRs in electronic enclosures, such as those used in TVs and displays, because safer alternatives are available. The law also requires reporting for electric and electronic products used outdoors, if they contain OFRs.

## Foam Blocks

### Harmful chemicals in recreational foam blocks

**Organohalogen flame retardants** (OFRs) are a class of chemicals used to meet fire safety standards. They are often added to foam blocks found in foam pits and gymnasiums to slow fires in open spaces.

### Hazards and negative health effects

People are primarily exposed through **skin contact** when using or playing on foam blocks. People can also **breathe in** or **ingest contaminated dust** that builds up as the foam breaks down over time.

OFRs can build up in the body over time. **Gradual, long-term exposure** may disrupt hormones, increase cancer risk, and harm brain development and reproductive health—especially in children.

### What we're doing to support safer products

**Safer Products for Washington** restricts OFRs in polyurethane foam blocks because safer alternatives are available. This means that foam blocks sold and distributed in Washington cannot contain OFRs.

The law also requires reporting for recreational wall padding made with polyurethane foam.

## Laundry Detergent

### Harmful chemicals in laundry detergent

**Alkylphenol ethoxylates** (APEs) are a group of chemicals used to lift dirt and oils from fabrics during washing.

### Hazards and negative health effects

APEs can break down to alkylphenols, which enter the environment through wastewater. Once released, they can build up in sensitive species such as fish, some which may be eaten by people.

Alkylphenols are known **endocrine disruptors**. Long-term exposure may interfere with hormone function, affect reproductive and developmental health, and harm aquatic life—even at low concentrations.

## What we're doing to support safer products

**Safer Products for Washington** restricts APEs in laundry detergent. We found many safer alternatives, such as those available in safer choice products.

## Furniture

### Harmful chemicals in indoor furniture and furnishings

**Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl substances**, also known as “**PFAS**,” are a group of chemicals used in many products to make them water- and stain-resistant.

**PFAS** are often called “**forever chemicals**” because they don't break down easily. They stay in the environment and can build up in people and animals over time.

### Hazards and negative health effects

People can be exposed to PFAS from indoor furniture, especially through **long-term contact** with **skin** or by **breathing in dust**.

Over time, **PFAS can build up in the body**. Exposure has been linked to cancer, harm to the immune system, and developmental problems.

## What we're doing to support safer products

Under the **Safer Products for Washington** law, indoor furniture that contains PFAS is restricted from being sold or distributed because safer alternatives exist. This means products sold in Washington—or online into Washington—**should not** contain these harmful chemicals.

For outdoor furniture, the rule requires reporting of PFAS use to promote transparency.

## Learn more about the laws & regulations

**Children's Products:** [Children's Safe Products Act](#)

**Consumer products:** [Safer Products for Washington](#)

**Cosmetics:** [Toxic-Free Cosmetics Act](#)

\*Bisphenols in thermal paper, like receipts, are restricted in Washington as of Jan. 1, 2026.