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Phthalates to be restricted in children's toys

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CBC News

The federal government said Tuesday it is going to place restrictions on the use of six phthalates in children's toys and some child-care products.

Phthalates are chemicals used to make polyvinyl chloride — a type of plastic — flexible. They are also used to hold colour and scents in certain products. Sometimes referred to as plasticizers, phthalates can be found in a wide range of consumer products, including perfumes, nail polish, vinyl floors, detergents, lubricants, food packaging, soap, paint, shampoo, toys, air fresheners and plastic bags.

Some medical research has suggested that phthalates may have feminizing properties in humans, while other research has said that phthalates might be linked with abdominal obesity and insulin resistance in men.

The new restrictions will limit the allowable concentrations of DEHP, DBP and BBP to no more than 1,000 milligrams per kilogram in the soft vinyl of all children's toys and child-care products. They will also restrict the permitted concentrations of DINP, DIDP and DNOP to no more than 1,000 mg/kg in the same products where children under four years old might put the soft vinyl in their mouths.

"These regulations will help ensure that children's toys and child-care articles imported, sold or advertised in Canada do not present a risk of phthalate exposure to young children," Health Minister Leona Aglukkaq said in a statement.

The new restrictions will come into force on June 10, 2011.

In 1998, Health Canada asked industry to voluntarily stop marketing soft vinyl "buccal" products — those meant to be put in the mouths of young children, such as pacifiers, teethingers, rattles and baby bottle nipples— in Canada if they contain the phthalates DINP and DEHP.

However, the government subsequently found that there are soft vinyl toys and child-care articles on the market that contain phthalates and that are not covered by the voluntary ban.

Rick Smith, the executive director of Environmental Defence Canada, applauded the Canadian government's latest move.

"[The regulations] are now aligned with measures taken in the United States and the European Union and will ensure our children receive the same high level of protection," he said in a statement.

As of 2009, any children's product sold or distributed in California cannot contain more than one-tenth of one per cent of phthalates. The European Union has outlawed the use of DEHP, DBP and BBP in children's products. DINP, DNOP and DIDP are also banned in toys that children under the age of three might put in their mouths.

Phthalates commonly used in products include:

- DBP (dibutyl phthalate).
- DINP (diisononyl phthalate).
- DEP (diethyl phthalate).
- DEHP (di 2-ethylhexyl phthalate).
- DMP (dimethyl phthalate).
- BBP (benzyl butyl phthalate).
- DNOP (di-n-octyl phthalate).
- DIDP (Diisodecyl phthalate).

Video



New rules for toys
The federal government is set to announce restrictions on the use of toxic chemicals called phthalates in the manufacture of children's toys
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