

Are there laws that protect us?

Ingredients in renovation, construction, and decorating materials within the EU are subject to the REACH and classification, labelling and packaging (CLP) regulations. A directive governs the reduction of volatile organic compounds (VOC) in paints and coatings. Biocides and wood preservatives must be labelled according to the CLP regulation. In Germany, a labelling system for renovation products provides greater transparency in relation to VOC emissions, with products rated from A+ (very low emissions) to C (high emissions). For harmful substances like heavy metals and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB), indoor air guideline values exist, below which no adverse health effects are expected based on current knowledge. Please note: regulations may differ between countries.

How can this guide help?

We inform you about concerning chemicals in products and provide tips on how to avoid them.

Your right to information

When purchasing a product, ask whether it contains any substances of concern. Retailers and/or manufacturers are obliged to inform you within 45 days whether the product contains chemicals of very high concern. This obligation to provide information only applies to certain substances (ECHA Candidate List of substances of very high concern). However, you can influence product policy by asking critical questions. WECF is committed to pollutant free products in politics and in production. Support us with a donation.

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Would you like to know more?

www.projectnesting.org, <https://www.wen.org.uk/our-work/greenbaby/>

Get in touch with us

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General Tips

- Take your time when looking for safe products; check labels for ingredients and ask questions – even when shopping online.
- If you are pregnant, let others renovate.
- Start renovating and furnishing at least three months before the birth. This will allow everything to air out properly.
- Preferably buy products labelled A+, which release fewer volatile, harmful substances into the air.
- Ventilate your home thoroughly! Two to three times a day for 5 to 10 minutes. After renovation work and installing furniture, you should air the room thoroughly for one to two days. If possible, leave furniture outside to off-gas any toxic chemicals.



- Avoid products labelled with the following symbols:



- Use the following labels as a guide:



Further links

www.projectnesting.org, www.wen.org.uk/2019/10/23/green-baby
www.oekotest.de (German), www.ecolabel.com/en/, www.test.de (German)

Apps

ToxFox, CodeCheck, Yuka

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	Walls...	Floor...	Furniture	Textiles...	Chemical	Usage	Possible health risks
	Red	Green	Yellow	Purple	Acetaldehyde	Furniture, decoration and furnishing materials, parquet, laminate, adhesives, glazes, paint strippers	<i>Irritating to eyes, respiratory tract, carcinogenic</i>
	Red	Green	Yellow	Purple	Azo dyes	Dyes for upholstery fabrics, curtains, etc.	<i>Release of carcinogenic aromatic amines</i>
	Red	Green	Yellow	Purple	Benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene, xylenes, etc.	Aromatic hydrocarbons in paints are also present in building and decorative products. Toluene is prohibited for consumer spray paints	<i>Benzene: carcinogenic, toluene: reprotoxic, skin irritant</i>
	Red	Green	Yellow	Purple	Brominated flame retardants	Flame retardant treatment of textiles, mattresses, fabrics, blankets, quilts, cushions, sofas, armchairs, etc.	<i>Polybrominated: persistent organic pollutants and carcinogenic, mutagenic and reprotoxic substances (CMR), other compounds: Hormonally active substances, effects on the nervous system</i>
	Red	Green	Yellow	Purple	Cadmium, nickel, cobalt, lead (metals)	Traces in pigments, dyes, colours, PVC	<i>Lead: neurotoxic. Cadmium: carcinogenic, mutagenic, reprotoxic. Nickel: contact allergen and carcinogenic. Cobalt: carcinogenic, mutagenic, reprotoxic</i>
	Red	Green	Yellow	Purple	DEHP, DINP, DIDP, DnOP (phthalates)	Plasticisers for PVC furniture, floor coverings, etc.	<i>DEHP: Reproductive toxicant, effects on development and fertility. Several are suspected of being endocrine disruptors</i>
	Red	Green	Yellow	Purple	Formaldehyde	Adhesives from chipboard or plywood, paints, varnishes, waxes, textiles (curtains, carpets), leather products	<i>Irritant to the respiratory tract, skin-sensitising, promotes hypersensitivity and allergies, carcinogenic</i>
	Red	Green	Yellow	Purple	Glycol ether (more than 80 derivatives)	Solvents or preservatives in paints, varnishes, adhesives, biocides, DIY products, materials, PVC coatings, chipboard	<i>All of them are VOCs. More than a dozen are classified as reprotoxic, 6 are classified as substances of very high concern by the REACH regulation. DEGME is banned in paints and paint strippers for the general public</i>
	Red	Green	Yellow	Purple	Nanosilver	Antibacterial treatment of textiles, electronic devices, household appliances	<i>Skin penetrating, toxic to cells, suspected carcinogenic effect, persistent in the environment, promotes bacterial resistance</i>
	Red	Green	Yellow	Purple	Nonylphenols	In textiles/leather that should not be cleaned with water; in some biocides; prohibited in cleaning agents	<i>Persistent, bioaccumulative, toxic (PBT) toxic to aquatic organisms, endocrine disruptor</i>
	Red	Green	Yellow	Purple	Perchloroethylene, trichloroethylene	Adhesives, paints, lubricants, etc.	<i>Perchloroethylene: carcinogenic. Trichloroethylene: carcinogenic and mutagenic. Substance of very high concern. Risk of infertility</i>

Protect health – avoid toxic chemicals

WECF Guide
Updated edition



Renovation and Do It Yourself

Which room will be the children's bedroom?

Indoor air is generally more polluted than outdoor air. It can contain up to 300 volatile organic compounds (VOCs). Mould, tobacco smoke, furniture, etc., are sources of pollution and VOCs. You can significantly reduce the level of pollution in your child's indoor surroundings by consciously purchasing healthy products.



■ Tips

- **Choose a room that is easy to keep clean and well ventilated.**
- **It is best to redecorate three months before the baby arrives so that everything can air out well.**
- **Always allow a freshly renovated room and new furnishings to air out.**

■ Tips

- **Ask experts if you suspect that lead or asbestos is present in the paints, insulation, walls ceiling etc.**
- **Use the labelling of pollutant emissions (A+ to C) as a guide. Beware: A+ means that there will be 1,000 µg/m³ VOC emissions up to 28 days after application.**
- **Choose a paint with a seal of approval. Such as no VOC's.**
- **Buy water-based paints.**
- **Use paint instead of wallpaper: plaster and paint positively affect the indoor climate.**
- **Still want to wallpaper? Use paper wallpaper and water-soluble paste, free of antimicrobials.**



Paints & walls

Paints, varnishes and adhesives can contain aromatic hydrocarbons, aldehydes and solvents. If these evaporate, they can irritate the eyes, throat and nose and cause unpleasant odours or headaches. Vinyl wallpapers contain plasticisers and PVC. Water-based paints contain 5-10% volatile solvents. Natural colours can also contain preservatives and chemicals. Caution: Odour-free is not the same as harmless.

Floor coverings & carpets

Babies and crawling children spend a lot of time on the floor. Smooth floors are easy to keep clean and dust-free. Stone floors or tiles are best suited for kitchens and bathrooms. Laminate flooring should not contain PVC, as this contains plasticisers. When buying new laminate, check that it does not contain formaldehyde, and which adhesive was used. Some adhesives are highly toxic! If possible, choose cork, wood or real linoleum flooring instead of laminate.

■ Tips

- **Use the A+ to C labelling and labels as a guide.**
- **For parquet flooring, you should opt for regional wood.**
- **Bamboo, real linoleum, cork and natural rubber are preferable to tropical woods and laminate.**
- **Avoid floors made of PVC laminate or synthetic rubber with a PVC layer.**
- **Want a carpet? Coir, sisal and fibre are usually low in pollutants and environmentally friendly. Cotton or wool may contain pesticide residues. Look for the eco-labels!**



■ Tips

- **Ventilate as often as possible - 2-3 times a day for 5-10 minutes! This removes pollutants and moisture from the indoor air and replaces it with fresh air. If you live next to a busy road, consider buying an air purifier.**
- **Vacuum and mop regularly so that your baby can crawl and play safely on the floor.**



Healthy living

Damp and mould can lead to respiratory diseases. Mould is caused by drying laundry in the home, cooking, poor construction and inadequate ventilation. Air fresheners do not freshen the air and can make it worse. The fragrances and solvents they contain can cause allergies or headaches. Although a number of harmful substances may not be used in products for small children, they may be, contained in furniture, household items and electrical appliances. They accumulate in the air and collect in the dust. Babies can come into contact with these harmful substances.

Furniture

Furniture, furnishings and decorations can contain harmful substances. This also applies to adhesives, paints, varnishes and textiles. These pollutants can escape into the indoor air; be inhaled and accumulate in house dust. So, it is important to select appropriate quality varnishes and allow furniture to air out well before use.



■ Tips

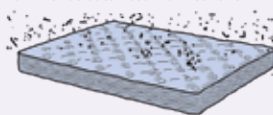
- **Buy furniture with an eco-label and choose European Union-made, as these are usually subject to stricter environmental standards.**
- **Sometimes second-hand furniture made from solid wood is a better choice.**
- **Make sure that the floor can be easily vacuumed or cleaned.**
- **Chipboard is glued and, therefore, contains binding agents. Look out for eco-labels when buying furniture made of chipboard.**

■ Tips

- **Wash all clothes and textiles multiple times before use to reduce harmful chemicals.**
- **Choose louvres or blinds over curtains to minimize dust accumulation.**
- **Air out new mattresses for an extended period before use.**
- **Use a washable cover, turn the mattress monthly, and air it frequently.**
- **Look for environmental labels when buying.**

Textiles & mattresses

Imported mattresses are often treated with biocidal products to protect against insects and moisture. Household textiles are dyed and have often undergone many treatments (crease, stain, flame, mite protection, etc.). They are less regulated than clothing. Articles made of cotton may contain pesticide residues. The label „Wash before use“ often indicates the presence of harmful substances from textile production.



Protect health – avoid toxic chemicals

What is the problem?

Babies and small children are exposed to many harmful chemicals daily from items they come into contact with and their living environment. These can enter the body via the skin, the respiratory tract and the oral mucosa (e.g. when sucking). Children spend a lot of time indoors. Prolonged contact with harmful substances - e.g. when sleeping or playing on the floor – allows them to enter the body. These substances can be carcinogenic or corrosive, irritate the skin and respiratory tract and trigger allergies. Endocrine disruptors (EDCs) can disrupt the hormonal system, have a negative impact on child development and can lead to fertility problems.

Why are children particularly at risk?

Babies and children are particularly sensitive to harmful chemicals. Due to their larger skin surface area in relation to their weight, higher respiratory rate and faster metabolism, they absorb more harmful substances than adults. Their immune and nervous systems are still developing, and they excrete toxic substances more slowly. That is why harmful substances can remain in their body for longer. Although many chemicals are authorised under EU law and are considered „safe“, they can harm children, as only the effects on adults have been studied. It is important to know that harmful substances can pass from the mother to the child during pregnancy.