

Are there laws that protect us?

The European Toy Safety Directive and chemicals legislation do not adequately protect children: many chemicals that are hazardous to health are still permitted in toys. The draft for a new EU toy regulation is currently being discussed (end of 2024) with significant tightening, such as a ban on (suspected) endocrine disruptors and the extension of banned chemicals in toys for children up to the age of three to all age groups. A transitional period of 30 months is proposed; all toys placed on the market before the end of this period should be sold off in the following twelve months. This means that there will be hardly any changes before 2027 or 2028. Please note: regulations may differ between countries when it comes to toys.

How can this guide help?

Only a few safe brands exist and there are no labeling requirements for toy ingredients. This makes shopping difficult. WECF informs you about chemicals of concern in toys and provides practical tips on how to avoid them.

Your right to information

When buying a toy, ask whether it contains any harmful ingredients and if they have been tested for hormonal effects, for example. There is an obligation to provide information within 45 days. Even if this only applies to certain chemicals (ECHA Candidate List of substances of very high concern), 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/>
www.wecf.org

Get in touch with us

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General tips

- Less is more! Focus on quality not quantity.
- Avoid plastic toys.
- Don't buy toys that have a chemical smell or are perfumed or feel unpleasant.
- Make sure that no small parts can detach and be swallowed by a child.
- Please note: CE labelling is meaningless for parents. It is aimed at the authorities and is only a mandatory „self-declaration by the manufacturer“ that EU regulations have complied with.
- Unpack new toys and allow them to off-gas outside.
- The following labels will help you choose:



Tip

Compare the information on the product with the hazardous ingredients listed in the table.

Further links

www.projectnesting.org
<https://www.wen.org.uk/our-work/greenbaby/>
www.oekotest.de (German)
www.spielgut.de (German)
www.test.de (German)

Apps

ToxFox, CodeCheck, Yuka

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Dolls	Cuddly toys	Wooden toys	Plastic toys	Colours and cosmetics	Electronic toys
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Hazardous chemicals	Possible health risks
Aniline (aromatic amine in azo dyes)	Very toxic, can cause cancer, damages genes
Bisphenol-A (hard plastic). Maximum migration limit for toys for children under 3 years of age	Interferes with fertility and the endocrine system, increased risk of cancer
Lead (pigments)	Carcinogenic, reduces fertility, interferes with the development of the child's brain
Brominated, phosphorus-containing flame retardants, etc. (migration limit for TCEP, TCPP and TCDP for toys for children under 3 years of age)	Interferes with development, the endocrine system and reproductive capacity
Cadmium (pigments)	Carcinogenic, toxic by inhalation, reduces fertility, interferes with the development of the child's brain
Chromates (pigments)	Carcinogenic, mutagenic, reduces fertility, causes burns
CMIT, MIT, BIT (isothiazolinone compounds)	Contact allergens
Formaldehyde (allergen)	Carcinogenic, mutagenic and interferes with fertility
Limonene, linalool, other fragrances (some are banned or subject to labelling)	Allergy triggers
Nickel (metals)	Contact allergen
Nonylphenol (textiles)	Disrupts the hormone system
Phthalates (plasticisers). Some are banned in all toys (DEHP etc.) or in toys intended to be put in the mouth.	Disrupts development and the endocrine system, reduces the ability to reproduce
Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) (hard plastic)	Some are carcinogenic

Protect children – avoid toxic chemicals

WECF Guide
Updated edition



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Based on the SVH list www.chemsec.org

Dolls

Dolls are often made of plastic, plush and filling material, wear clothes and jewellery or have internal electronic parts. They can contain many different hazardous ingredients, such as traces of carcinogenic polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs). They may also contain phthalates in soft plastics, which are suspected of having a hormonal effect, or nonylphenols in textile parts.



■ Tips

- **Be careful with miniature dolls, which are considered decorative items and are less well-regulated than toys.**
- **Choose dolls made of textiles, Waldorf dolls or dolls made of cotton.**
- **Air or wash the dolls (if possible) before use.**
- **Avoid perfumed dolls.**

■ Tips

- **Opt for products from natural textile companies and look for the Oeko-Tex 100 seal.**
- **Wash the product before use.**
- **Avoid superfluous cuddly toys; other, less strict regulations apply to promotional items or decorations.**



Cuddly toys

Cuddly toys, especially those with long hair or filled with synthetics, can contain PAHs, traces of optical brighteners (which can irritate the skin), allergens and dangerous brominated flame retardants to make them less flammable. In 2022, only eleven of 22 plush toys tested were classified as safe by Stiftung Warentest (German consumer organisation).

Wooden toys

Many toys are made of wood, such as wooden puzzles, building blocks, doll's houses and shops. Some of them can be absolutely harmless, such as solid wood blocks, but others can be extremely harmful. Glued wooden toys, in particular, often contain carcinogenic formaldehyde. Be careful with painted surfaces, as they may contain solvents, lead or other heavy metals.

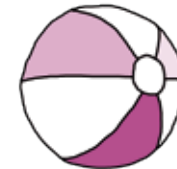
■ Tips

- **Choose untreated wood if possible. It is best to choose solid wood products without varnish.**
- **Air the toy before use to allow volatile organic compounds (VOCs) to evaporate.**
- **Look for labels (SpielGut, FSC, etc.) and age specifications.**



■ Tips

- **Look out for the labels „PVC-free“, „BPA-free“ or „phthalate-free“.**
- **Do not let a small child sleep with a „squishy“ toy or put it in their mouth.**
- **Use all your senses when buying - avoid chemically smelling or fragranced products.**
- **Pay attention to labels.**



Plastic

Some inflatable toys or soft plastic toys may contain PVC and phthalates. Currently, 3 phthalates are banned in all toys; others are regulated in toys for small children which can be put in the mouth during play. PAHs are present as contaminants in soft and hard plastics. Be careful with fashionable squishy toys: they may contain substances that may contain irritating fragrances and ingredients that irritate the eyes and respiratory tract.

Colours, make-up and more

Felt-tip pens, paints, slime, jewellery, modelling clay, finger paints and crayons can sometimes contain aniline (probable carcinogenic), methylisothiazolinone (allergenic preservative) and sometimes formaldehyde releasers (respiratory irritant). Ready-made slime mixtures contain boric acid (toxic to fertility). Cosmetics sometimes contain fragrances, colourants, preservatives and traces of metals (including nickel, which is allergenic).



■ Tips

- **Avoid toys with fragrances; these can trigger allergies. Choose food or vegetable dyes and those without preservatives.**
- **Try out alternatives, e.g. homemade salt dough, modelling clay with a seal of approval or slime made from corn flour. Instructions on the Internet.**



■ Tips

- **Wait until children are older to expose them to mobile phones, tablets and all other screens.**
- **Avoid electronic toys or toys with batteries, especially for young children**

Electronic toys

Screens are not recommended for under-threes. Connected toys are very popular. However, they increase children's exposure to radiofrequency radiation, which can affect children's cognitive functions, well-being and attention. Exposure to blue light from screens damages the retina and disturbs sleep.

Protect children – avoid toxic chemicals

What is the problem?

Despite some improvements, many toys still contain synthetic chemicals that can make children ill. Plastic toys contain dangerous plasticisers that can damage the endocrine system, glued wooden puzzles contain formaldehyde that can cause cancer, and cuddly toys contain harmful flame retardants. This is particularly ironic as independent tests confirm that almost all of these dangerous chemicals can be replaced by safer ones.

In the digital age, screen and virtual games are fascinating. But they have a variety of effects on a child's physical and mental development and attention. It's best to wait until children are older to play with digital devices and limit the time. Parents should supervise this type of play carefully without being distracted by digital media themselves.

Why are children particularly at risk?

Children are much more sensitive than adults: due to their larger skin surface area in relation to their weight, higher breathing volume and increased metabolic rate, they absorb more pollutants. Their immune and nervous systems are still developing. Dangerous pollutants can also be found in cosmetics, furniture and other everyday products. Children are, therefore, exposed to a large number of hazardous chemicals from many different sources. Even the smallest amount of harmful chemicals are enough to permanently impair a child's development – sometimes for a lifetime. Studies show that harmful chemicals are one reason for rising allergy and cancer rates.

You can find more information about this on our website www.projectnesting.org; www.nestbau.info (German)