

## Are there laws that protect?

The EU-wide Toys Directive and the European chemicals legislation, REACH, do not sufficiently protect our children because many hazardous chemicals are still allowed. Also, toy manufacturers are not required to list the chemicals used in the making of the toy, even if hazardous chemicals are present.

## How this toy guide can help you?

There are only a few tested labels and no labelling requirements for chemical 'ingredients' in toys. This makes the purchase of safe products difficult. The WECF toys guide provides information on hazardous chemicals and gives practical tips on how you can avoid them. For more information, please visit our website [www.wecf.eu](http://www.wecf.eu)

## Do Ask!

Please ask your retailer. They must respond within 45 days to let you know whether a toy contains certain substances. Unfortunately, this information is mandatory only for some substances. Nevertheless, the more customers that ask, the faster producers will change their production policy. So please keep on asking. By doing this you will protect the health of your child and influence the producers!

WECF is campaigning for toys without hazardous chemicals both in the political arena and by the manufacturers. Please help us!

## You want to know more?

[www.wecf.eu](http://www.wecf.eu)  
WECF Germany, Netherlands, France  
Women in Europe for a Common Future

[www.wecf.eu](http://www.wecf.eu)

## General Tips

- *Less is more! Buy fewer toys, aim for quality over quantity.*
- *Avoid very cheap toys because they often contain more hazardous chemicals.*
- *Do not buy a toy with a strong chemical or perfumed smell or if it feels uncomfortable to the touch.*
- *For young children: make sure that no small parts can be pulled off and swallowed.*
- *Unpack any new toy and leave it outdoors to let some of the hazardous chemicals evaporate.*
- *Please note that the CE label does not guarantee safety.*
- *If available notice the German GS mark. It is independent and shows that legal guidelines have been applied.*
- *At [www.healthytoys.org](http://www.healthytoys.org) devised by the American Ecology Centre you can find ratings for toy brands and even for single toy products.*
- *Find out more from the Ethical Consumer and other relevant sources (see links).*

### Legend

Dolls	Red
Cuddly toys	Orange
Wooden toys	Green
Plastic	Purple
Art materials & cosmetics	Yellow
Electronic toys	Light Green

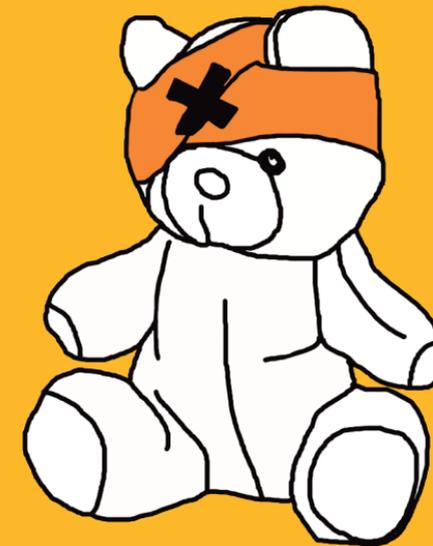
**Links**  
[www.wecf.eu](http://www.wecf.eu)  
[www.projectnesting.org](http://www.projectnesting.org)  
[www.healthytoys.org](http://www.healthytoys.org)  
[www.ethicalconsumer.org/FreeBuyersGuides/babychild/toys.aspx](http://www.ethicalconsumer.org/FreeBuyersGuides/babychild/toys.aspx)  
[www.healthyschoolenvironmentforkids.ca](http://www.healthyschoolenvironmentforkids.ca)

	Hazardous chemicals	Possible health effects?
■	Aniline	Very toxic, carcinogenic and mutagenic
■	Bisphenol-A	Disrupts the reproductive and hormone system, and increases cancer risk
■	Brominated Flame Retardants	Disrupts development and the hormone system, toxic to the reproductive system
■	Cadmium	Carcinogenic, toxic by inhalation, impairs fertility, disrupts development of child's brain
■	Chlorinated paraffins	Carcinogenic, disrupts the hormone system
■	Chromium	Carcinogenic, mutagenic, toxic: causes severe burns, impairs fertility
■	Formaldehyde	Carcinogenic, mutagenic and toxic to reproduction
■	Lead	Carcinogenic and impairs fertility. Effects on the developing brain
■	Nonylphenol	Disrupts the hormone system
■	Organotin	Carcinogenic, disrupts the hormone system and fertility
■	Perfluorinated chemicals	Carcinogenic, disrupts fertility
■	Phthalates (softeners)	Disrupts development and the hormone system. Impairs fertility
■	Triclosan	Very toxic to aquatic life, disrupts the hormone system

Protect children –  
avoid hazardous chemicals !

WECF guide

Safe toys



WECF | Women in Europe for a Common Future

## Dolls

Dolls can contain a wide range of hazardous chemicals as they are made of plastic, plush and stuffing, wear clothes and jewellery or contain electronic components. A recent German eco-safety test (Ökotest Dec 2007) showed 12 out of 15 dolls failed to comply with safety standards.



### Tips!

- **Avoid buying small dolls!** They are often classified as decorations, and are therefore not subject to legal limits for chemicals
- **Buy rag dolls** or organic dolls with eco-labels
- **Wash stuffed dolls** before use

### Tips!

- **Look for products from natural or organic manufacturers** and look for the Öko-Tex-100 and other eco-labels
- **Wash and air toys before use**
- **Avoid free or gift toys** distributed as part of a promotion



## Cuddly Toys

This category includes teddy bears, plush and stuffed toys. Toys with long or synthetic fur often contain allergens and hazardous brominated flame retardants, as well as fibres that could be swallowed by a child. A rating for 'Best Buys' is available from the Ethical Consumer magazine: <http://www.ethicalconsumer.org/FreeBuyersGuides/babychild/toyssoft.aspx>

## Wooden toys

The vast array of wooden toys available includes puzzles, building blocks, doll's houses, and toyshops and farms etc. Unpainted solid wooden toys are usually completely safe but, some wooden toys can be hazardous. None of the wooden puzzles passed the German eco-safety test (Ökotest) in November 2008. Wooden toys containing glue are even more likely to contain the carcinogenic chemical, formaldehyde. Parents should beware of varnishes and paints that can contain lead or other heavy metals.

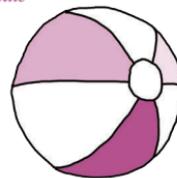
### Tips!

- **Buy solid wooden toys** with as few glued parts as possible
- **Buy unvarnished and unpainted toys** wherever possible or watch out for non toxic and natural finishes



### Tips!

- **Choose natural rubber toys**
- **Look for the label 'PVC-free' or 'phthalate-free'**
- **Avoid products which smell strongly of chemicals**



## Plastic

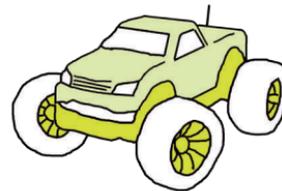
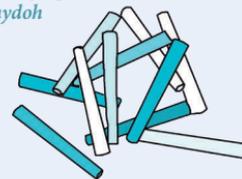
Soft plastic toys such as synthetic rubber toys, balloons, soft bath toys, etc. can contain hormone disrupting phthalates. There have been numerous global and European scares. In 2004 it was discovered that Scooby Doo (plastic bands) contained up to 50% of phthalates. Hard plastic toys are safer because they are less likely to contain phthalates. However, they can also sometimes contain heavy metals and other hazardous substances.

## Art materials & cosmetics

This category includes crayons, pens, paints, playdoh, finger and face paints, and cosmetic sets, which can contain parabens, lead, formaldehyde and phthalates. In 2009, the Canadian Department of Federal Health found unacceptable high levels of heavy metals like lead, arsenic, mercury, cadmium and antimony in children's face paints.

### Tips!

- **Do not buy fragranced toys**, as these can trigger lifelong fragrance allergies, which cannot be cured
- **Choose products with food or plant colourings** and without preservatives
- **Make your own finger paints** or playdoh



### Tips!

- **Check out Greenpeace's ratings of electronics companies on their toxics policy:** - <http://www.greenpeace.org/international/campaigns/toxics/electronics>
- **For young children avoid buying electronic and battery operated toys**

## Electronic toys

These include battery-powered and electronic products such as games consoles, game boys, mobile phones, electric cars, trains and computers. Hazards include brominated flame retardants as well as poisoning risks from leaking batteries.

## Protect children – avoid hazardous chemicals!

### What's the problem?

Many toys contain synthetic substances, which are known to be hazardous to children's health. These include softeners used in plastic toys, which can disrupt the hormone system, formaldehyde used in glued wooden puzzles, which can cause cancer, or flame retardants in teddy bears that can be toxic to development. Independent tests confirm that almost all of those hazardous chemicals can be substituted by safer alternatives.

### Why are children particularly vulnerable?

Children are much more sensitive to exposure to toxic chemicals than adults because

of their larger skin surface in proportion to their weight, their higher respiratory volume and increased metabolic rate. Consequently, they absorb more hazardous chemicals than an adult. Their immune and nervous systems are still developing. Hazardous chemicals are also found in cosmetics, furniture and other everyday products. So children are exposed to a variety of hazardous chemicals from many different sources. Even the smallest amounts of hazardous chemicals are sufficient to harm the development of a child – sometimes with lifelong consequences. The increasing allergy and cancer rates demonstrate this.

For more information, please visit our website [www.wecf.eu](http://www.wecf.eu)