

Facts on Common Chemicals from the [Safer Chemicals Healthy Families Coalition](#)



Safer Chemicals Healthy Families is perhaps [the most important coalition of forces](#) working in the United States for reform of out-dated toxic chemical laws, working with retailers to phase out hazardous chemicals from the marketplace and educating the public about ways to protect families from toxic chemicals.

It represents more than 11 million individuals and includes parents, health professionals, advocates for people with learning and developmental disabilities, reproductive health advocates, environmentalists and businesses from

across the nation. It includes over 450 organizations and businesses united by common concern about toxic chemicals in our homes, places of work, and products we use every day. The Safer Chemicals Healthy Families coalition is staffed by a seasoned group of organizers that makes up its "Kitchen Table Campaigns" team.

The SCHF coalition offers two lists of toxic chemicals on their site. One is a list of the top 100 hazardous chemicals, and it also provides a quick take on jurisdictions that have identified these hazards. It's available in pdf. They also post a shorter list, with more details about the chemicals listed, including their effects on us and the environment and [in what products you are most likely to find them](#). Check out the fact sheets by clicking on the substance. Their information is drawn from the leading peer-reviewed science.

- [Asbestos](#)
- [Bisphenol A \(BPA\)](#)
- [Formaldehyde](#)
- [Heavy Metals: Mercury, Arsenic, and Lead](#)
- [Hexane](#)
- [Hexavalent Chromium](#)
- [Methylene chloride](#)
- [N-Methylpyrrolidone](#)
- [PCBs and DDT](#)
- [Perfluorinated Compounds](#)
- [Persistent, Bioaccumulative and Toxic Chemicals \(PBTs\)](#)
- [Phthalates](#)

- [Toxic Flame Retardants \(PBDEs\)](#)
- [Toxic Flame Retardants \(TDCP and TCEP\)](#)
- [Trichloroethylene \(TCE\)](#)
- [Vinyl Chloride](#)

Once you read this list, you may think: But even if I read the fact sheets, when I see a new product, how will I know if those chemicals are in it? And there's the rub. The chemical industry has fiercely resisted mandatory labeling on most consumer products, so mostly you *won't* know. You can try to make educated guesses once you've read the fact sheets, you can refer to [EWG's safer products list](#), and you can try to shop cautiously. Here's a good tip: If you buy products that chemically sensitive expert sources say are safe you'll be best off. For example, check out [My Chemical Free House](#) and google your other queries.

But ultimately, as the SCHF coalition says, "you can't shop your way around these chemicals." And these chemicals spread into air, water and soil - so you can't run, and you can't hide, and your personal choices can take you only a limited way away from these dangerous poisons.



If we kill our bees, we kill ourselves. Credit: [Beyond Pesticides Action](#)

So the most important actions you can take are social measures geared to stop them at their source, which is to say to take economic and political action. [SCHF runs ongoing campaigns](#) to get major retailers to remove key classes of chemicals - and these are always important to join and spread.

But in my view, political action that demands labeling - so, rendering the poisons visible and obvious - combined with legislation to get these dangerous substances out of our lives, in local, state/provincial and national legislatures - these are ultimately the most important and effective steps to take. Check out [Environmental Defence Canada's campaign](#) to pressure the

Canadian government to ban toxic everyday chemicals. These measures not at all mutually exclusive. But in the end, without laws that effectively change the parameters, we won't get to where we need to be.

Remember this: we humans did not co-evolve with these chemicals in our daily lives; and we will evolve much more successfully in the future without them.