

Made in Maine...



natural ingredients:  
*love, hope, potential*

additives:  
*mercury, lead, dioxin*



Wouldn't it be wonderful if all children could begin life as healthy as possible—  
isn't that *the way life should be*?

Sadly, we haven't done enough to prevent exposure to unnecessary, toxic chemicals that can cause childhood cancers, learning disabilities, and other developmental problems.

More and more each year, scientific studies are showing that exposure to toxic chemicals plays a part in a growing number of diseases, disabilities and deaths. Such exposure, however, is preventable in many cases. Safe alternatives to many hazardous chemicals exist, and their use will improve public health, lower health costs, protect the environment and keep our homes and children safe. *Please see the back of this page for more about some common toxic chemicals.*

We ask our leaders to support a comprehensive chemicals policy that:

- requires the replacement of unnecessary, toxic chemicals with safe, affordable alternatives;
- holds corporations accountable by requiring them to show that all their chemicals are fully tested for health and safety hazards;
- expands our right, as citizens, to know that the products being sold to us are safe.

Also made in Maine... Progress

This year, Governor Baldacci worked with us on an Executive Order promoting safer chemicals in consumer products, which he signed in February. The Executive Order commits the Government of Maine to phase out its use of long-lasting toxic chemicals while making information available to the public about safer alternatives. The Executive Order looks to the future by spelling out the next steps that Maine will take against chemicals that have already been identified as priorities such as mercury, lead and pesticides. The Governor also announced the creation of a task force designed to identify safer alternatives to hazardous chemicals and promote the use and development of alternatives. "We are all at risk—our children especially—from hazardous chemicals," Governor Baldacci said. "When there are toxic materials in the house, kids will find them. I am proud that Maine is continuing to be a leader in making this state one of the healthiest states in the nation."

Our campaign for clean-up of the Orrington Holtrachem site progresses as well. In September 2004, MPA secured a pledge from Governor Baldacci to make clean-up of the closed Holtrachem plant a top priority. In 2005, the Governor announced his plan to move ahead with the most comprehensive clean-up plan of the site, requiring the plant's former owner to pay \$200 million to truck away 370,000 tons of mercury-contaminated soil.

To learn what you can do, visit us on the Web at [www.mainepeoplesalliance.org](http://www.mainepeoplesalliance.org).

## MERCURY

The Environmental Protection Agency estimates that 630,000 children every year are exposed to mercury in the womb, putting them at risk for problems with brain development. Mercury pollution comes from coal-fired power plants, incinerators, cement kilns, and products such as mercury thermometers, thermostats, and fluorescent light bulbs. One of the most common ways people are exposed to mercury is through eating fish. Fish consumption advisories for mercury are increasing faster than for any other pollutant.

## LEAD

Young children are exposed to lead through ingestion of lead paint chips and ingestion of contaminated soil or house dust. It has been found in many consumer products such as crayons, mini-blinds, candle wicks and pottery, and recently, lead has been found to leach from children's plastic toys. Lead causes a range of health problems including learning deficits and behavioral problems, kidney dysfunction, brain damage and cancer. Recent research shows that extremely low levels of lead can have irreversible effects on the brains of infants and young children.

## DIOXIN

Dioxin is created in the production of polyvinyl chloride (PVC), one of the most widely used plastics. At low levels, dioxin can cause a range of health problems from learning disabilities to cancer. Burning of PVC waste seriously impacts public health and the environment. The biggest PVC-burning states include Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Maine—which all burn more than half of their waste. There is no way to get rid of PVC once manufactured. It is with us forever—a legacy left to the next generation. You can't burn it—it just changes to dioxin. You can't bury it—chemicals leak out into the surrounding soil and groundwater. You can't recycle it—it contaminates the recycling process.

### Sources and additional resources:

*Body Burden—The Pollution in Newborns*, Environmental Working Group, July 14, 2005

*Canaries in the Kitchen: "Teflon Toxicosis" is deadly to pet birds. Are we at risk?* Environmental Working Group, 2006. Environmental Health Strategy Center, [www.preventharm.org](http://www.preventharm.org).

*Healthy Homes and Families: How to reduce your family's exposure to toxic chemicals at home*, Learning Disabilities Association of Maine.

*Polluting our Future: Chemical Pollution in the U.S. that Affects Child Development and Learning*, National Environmental Trust, Physicians for Social Responsibility, and The Learning Disabilities Association of America, Sep. 2000. Safer Products Project, [www.safer-products.org](http://www.safer-products.org).

*Toxins in babies' blood prompt call for action*, Misty Edgecomb, Bangor Daily News, Friday, July 15, 2005

## FLAME RETARDANTS

Brominated Flame Retardants (BFRs) are toxic chemicals added to many household items in order to reduce the spread of fire, including the following products: the plastics in computers and electronics, the foam in mattresses and seat cushions, and the plastic backing of man-made fibers in carpeting and upholstery. These chemicals "escape" into the air and dust of households, schools and offices during product use, and into the environment when old products are discarded. The presence of BFRs is rapidly rising in human breast milk, wildlife, and the environment. Animal studies show that these chemicals cause damage to the thyroid gland, brain and immune system. As safer alternatives are widely available, the sale of two kinds of toxic flame retardants has already been banned in Maine.

## BPA

Bisphenol-A (BPA), a chemical used in baby and water bottles, can alter the biological systems of children for the rest of their lives. Animal studies suggest that very low doses of BPA can affect brain function, damage the immune system, and cause hyperactivity. BPA contamination is widespread in the environment, and it does not break down easily.

## TEFLON

When heated above certain temperatures (as when preheating a pan on a burner set on high), Teflon and other "non-stick" pans release toxic gases that have been known to kill pet birds and cause sickness in humans. Chemicals used in making Teflon and stain resistant coatings and fabric treatments include toxic substances that have caused organ damage, low thyroid levels, and cancer in lab animals. When Teflon was approved by the FDA in 1960, the Teflon chemicals found in the tested food were judged safe. That was 45 years ago. Recent scientific studies suggest it's time to reassess the safety of non-stick cookware.