

Phthalates Exposure

How to Reduce Risks to Your Family

You may not realize it, but you and your family likely encounter phthalates every day. These chemicals are found in many plastics, including food packaging, and can migrate into food products during processing. They are also in personal care products like shampoos, soaps and laundry detergents, and in the vinyl flooring in many homes.

Phthalates have been mentioned in the news lately after a group of scientists urged for better federal regulation of the chemicals. Despite evidence of the harm these chemicals can cause, regulation in the United States have largely focused on phthalates in children's toys. A recent move by the General Mills-owned food brand Annie's to eliminate phthalates from its macaroni and cheese packaging materials and food processing equipment suggests that stricter rules should be in place.

What are phthalates and how are they used?

Phthalates (pronounced "tah-lates") are chemicals that have been widely used since the 1950s to soften plastics that would otherwise be brittle and crack when bent. Because phthalates are not chemically bound to the plastics they are added to, they are continuously released into the air or food or liquid. (Did you ever notice how plastic sometimes hardens over time? That's because the phthalates have leached out of it.)

Phthalates are found in many products. In personal care items, they are used to help lubricate other substances, help lotions penetrate and soften the skin, and help



fragrances last longer. They are also used in toys, electronics, car-care products, insecticides, and many household products, such as adhesives, plastic wrap, plastic containers, flooring, furniture, and shower curtains.

Phthalates are used in food packaging and food processing items such as conveyor belts, plastic tubings for liquids, and even food preparation gloves. When these equipment contain phthalates and touch food, they end up in food items. Foods that are high in fat in particular can absorb phthalates through exposure during processing.

How do phthalates get into our bodies?

Ingestion. When a baby plays with or chews on an object that contains plasticizers (like a teether, squeeze toy, or bath book), the chemicals can end up in the child's body. Because babies put things in their mouth routinely, they are especially vulnerable to ingesting phthalates.

Older children also ingest plasticizers when they play with things that contain phthalates and then put their hands in their mouth.

We also ingest plasticizers by eating food that has been contaminated via certain food packaging or by drinking beverages from plastic bottles that leach the chemical into the food or liquid.

Absorption. Phthalates are found in many scented and cosmetic products, such as in deodorants, nail polish (where they help prevent chipping), hair spray (where they prevent stiffness), perfumes, lotions, creams, and powders (including baby lotions, creams, and powders). The chemicals from these products can be absorbed through the skin and into the bloodstream.

Inhalation. Phthalates can be breathed in from dust or fumes from any products that contain vinyl, such as vinyl flooring,

Initial and Annual Training Requirements

As a licensed and certified resource parent, each caregiver within the household must successfully complete training courses. This includes completing initial training requirements as well as annual training courses.

According to the RFA Written Directives, each resource parent is required to complete a minimum of 12 hours of pre-certification training and maintain 8 hours of training annually. This means that before a child can be placed in a home, resource parents must complete their training classes. Additionally, parents must attend 8 hours of training sessions every year to keep their license active. Parents should take classes that are appropriate to the age and needs of their children. Resource parents must also remember to keep copies of their unexpired first aid and CPR certificates.

First aid and CPR classes are offered by the Family & Children's Services on a routine basis. However, resource parents may take classes from other organizations, including the American Red Cross, the American Heart Association, a training program approved by the State Emergency Medical Services Authority, or a course offered by an accredited college or university.

If there are any questions about the requirement, where to take a course, or the training schedule, be sure to contact your RFA worker!

SECTION 11-19: Annual and Other Training

- (a) *Each Resource Parent shall submit copies of certificates verifying completion of cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and first aid training to a County no later than 90 days following Resource Family Approval.*
- (b) *Each Resource Parent shall complete a minimum of eight hours of annual training pursuant to Section 8-01.*
- (c) *Each Resource Parent shall complete relevant specialized training to meet the needs of a particular child or nonminor dependent in care, and any additional training deemed necessary by a County.*

vinyl seating (in cars, for example), and some diaper-changing mats. The production of fumes by these products is called off-gassing.

Are phthalates harmful?

Phthalates can disrupt the endocrine system, the glands that release hormones as the body's chemical messengers. This can impact brain development, hormone production, and thyroid function. But exactly how harmful phthalates are remains a question debated by scientists. Currently research studies are examining whether phthalates influence the timing of puberty or increase the risk for childhood obesity. Scientists are also looking at the relationship between phthalates and asthma.

How do I keep my family safe?

A few simple changes can make a big difference in promoting health and reducing phthalate levels in the home.

To minimize ingesting phthalates:

One easy change is to swap out plastic food and drink packaging containers with glass containers. For example, use glass storage containers. If that's not possible, it's best to let food cool to room temperature before placing it in plastic food storage containers. This is because high temperatures cause the chemicals to leach out of the plastics. Don't microwave food in plastic containers, because phthalates can migrate from storage containers into food.

You can also reduce phthalate exposure by checking labels to avoid using products that include phthalates, and by eating less processed food that might have absorbed phthalates during production. When you buy food such as cheese or meat wrapped in plastic, slice or scrape off a thin layer before serving.

When you do buy plastic bottles, look for bottles that are phthalate-free. Some of these products are marketed as such. In addition, check the bottom of plastic bottles and choose those labeled #1, 2, 4, or 5, which are generally considered safer. Plastics labeled #3 may leach phthalates.

To minimize absorbing phthalates:

Limit the amount of baby care products you use on your baby. When you do use baby care products, choose products that are phthalate-free or are without fragrance on the label. Unfortunately it's not always easy to tell from the list of ingredients. Manufacturers aren't required to list phthalates separately, so they may be included under the term "fragrance."

You can visit the Environmental Working Group's Skin Deep database: <https://www.ewg.org/skindeep/>. This website contains reviews of all kinds of cosmetic products (including baby products and sunscreens) and describe the ingredients in detail and their related concerns. They even have an app where you can scan product barcodes and see the review.

To minimize inhaling phthalates:

When painting or using other solvents, be sure the space is well ventilated and that your child is elsewhere. Choose non-vinyl shower curtains, raincoats, lawn furniture, and building materials whenever possible. Phthalates can wind up airborne and in the dust in your home. Wet mopping can help eliminate the chemical.

Avoid air fresheners. Most air fresheners (even if labeled "fragrance free") contain phthalates. Use a natural air refresher instead. You can even make your own simply by adding a few drops of a pure essential oil to a spray bottle of water.



Champions for Children

Mary Sanchez

Congratulations to Mary Sanchez, our July Champion for Children.

Mary has been an unwavering, dedicated caregiver to a soon-to-be 21 year old girl who has been in her care since nearly birth. The child in her care was born with severe debilitating medical issues that has left her nonverbal and immobile, requiring tremendous care with a multitude of varying appointments. Prior to turning 18, Mary agreed to become her conservator, remaining staunchly committed to making all the decisions necessary.



ahead and making adjustments for almost every situation, or in some cases letting go of certain events. Is someone's backyard wheelchair accessible, or does a particular park have a wheelchair ramp are just two of the questions persistently on her mind.

But no matter how chaotic situations may feel in the moment or how little sleep she gets, Mary lights up when thinking about the life she has been able to give to the young people in her care. "When I see them smile at me or when they want to hug me, it makes every day worth it," says Mary. "For whatever reason, this is my purpose. This child was placed with me for

a reason, and I'd like to believe that I've given her a chance for a better life, a good life."

Mary became a resource parent unexpectedly when a baby girl weighing 1 pound, 4 ounces at birth came into her life by chance. Her fiancée at the time was named the father of this baby girl, and asked Mary to help care of her. The baby girl spent the first 6 months of her life in the hospital, followed by a foster home where Mary watched the girl every weekend. One weekend when Mary went to pick up the child for their usual weekend get-away, the foster mom begged Mary to take her for good. "Here was this little girl that I would get to spoil on the weekends but give her back during the week. I found myself packing her belongings, crying, because I wasn't sure if I was ready," describes Mary. "But I knew I had to try, because if I didn't I would regret it."

Mary advises other parents to take it slow, breathe in, and give yourself a moment. "Don't worry about the unknown. Don't be afraid of what you don't know because eventually it all falls into place. Every now and then when you're feeling overwhelmed, take a walk. Bring the baby for a walk. Don't get down on yourself when you think you're not adjusting well, because you will. I'm still making it through even 20 years later."

Mary is now a parent to three children, and continues to assure all of their needs are met and each family members in her household is attended to. One of the biggest challenges she learned to navigate was anticipating the needs of her daughter with special needs. It requires constant planning

With the utmost pleasure, San Francisco Family and Children's Services along with the Parenting for Permanency College, proudly celebrates Mary for all of the care and commitment she provides to the young people in her home. The work that she completes each day doesn't go unnoticed and we appreciate all that she does for those around her. Congratulations to Mary, our July Champions for Children!

K.I.D.S.

Published bimonthly for San Francisco County foster parents, resource families, NREFMs and kin care providers. To suggest a topic, submit an article, promote an event, or provide feedback, email Sharon.Walchak@sfgov.org.

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Newsletter Website: <https://sfcaresforkids.org/kids-newsletter/>

Helpful Phone Numbers

HSA Operator	(415) 557-5000
CPS Child Abuse Hotline	(800) 856-5553 or (415) 558-2650
Foster Care Ombudsman	(415) 558-2828
Transportation Duty Line	(415) 557-5376
Licensing/RFA/Recruitment Hotline	(415) 558-2200
Free Foster Parenting Respite Service	(415) 861-4060 x 3035
Community Services	211
Non-emergency Government Services	311

FCS Agency Directory: www.sfhsa.org/174.htm

Alternative Family Services-PPC Training

RFA Pre-Service Approval Training	
English RFA Pre-Service Training	July 10-17, 2021 (Saturdays) 9 a.m.-4:45 p.m.
English RFA Pre-Service Training	August 3-12, 2021 (Tues/Thurs) 5-9:15 p.m.
Spanish RFA Pre-Service Training	July 24-31, 2021 (Saturdays) 9 a.m.-4:45 p.m.
SA/HIV Training	
SA/HIV Series (English)	August 24-Sept. 21, 2021 (Tues/Thurs) 5-9:15 p.m., including Aug. 18, 2021 (Saturday) 9 a.m.-5:15 p.m.
Ongoing Training	
Other RFA Ongoing Training Resources: (Reminder: Approved Resource Families are required to complete 8 hours of training yearly) Foster Parent College: http://www.fosterparentcollege.com QPI California-Just In Time Training: http://www.qpicalifornia.org Mandated Reporter Training: https://mandatedreporterca.com	
To register for training please contact Alternative Family Services (AFS)-PPC Training @ ppc@afs4kids.org or contact your RFA Worker. All training is through Zoom until further notice.	

Resource Parent Meetings and Support Groups

Resource Family Meetings:

For more information about Resource Family meetings/training and events please visit <https://foster-sf.org/information/training-schedule/> or contact Arlene Hylton at Arlene.hylton@sfgov.org or 451-557-5067.

Caregiver Quarterly Meeting - Quarterly (6 p.m.-8 p.m.)

1st. Tuesday of each Quarter - July 6, 2021

Resource Family Convening -Bi-monthly (5 p.m.-7 p.m.)

2rd Wednesday of EVERY OTHER month

Quality Parenting Initiative Meeting (QPI)

4th Thursday of Month (11 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.)
July 22, 2021 & August 26, 2021

Support Groups:

Resource Family Support Groups (SA/HIV) (7:30 to 9:30 p.m.)
3rd Tuesday (English) and 3rd Thursday (Spanish) of each month, 7:30 to 9:30 pm unless otherwise announced. To attend SA/HIV Support Group, please contact Sharon Walchak at (510) 282-4658.
English: July 20, 2021 & August 17, 2021
Spanish: July 15, 2021 & August 19, 2021

COFFEE WITH CAREGIVERS

Coffee with Caregivers Supports Relative, Non-Relative, Adoptive and Guardianship Caregivers
Grab your favorite drink, snack, and join us during the following virtual meetings occur Friday's from 1:30PM -2:30PM please Email Nichole at narnold@cacaregivers.org to register.

Education Corner

It may feel like the school year just ended, but the start of the 2021-22 school year is fast approaching! Here are a few things to consider, as we get closer to the first day of school:

- Do you know if your school-age child is enrolled in school, and in which school?
- Do you know if your child's school is offering different options for learning (hybrid, in-person, etc.), and if so, what your child will be doing?
- If your child is going in person, is there a transportation plan for them to get to school?
- Have you talked to your child about the return to school, prepared them for what may be different this year, and given them a chance to discuss any of their fears or concerns?

Please keep in mind that the child's education rights holder must approve any enrollment decisions. If you have any questions about who holds education rights for a child, you can contact the Protective Services Worker for that information. If you have any education-related questions, including over the summer, you can always reach out to FCS's education liaison, Gloria Anthony Oliver, at gloria.anthony-oliver@sfgov.org or 415-636-2224

Do you live in SF and have a private space that can be turned into a bedroom? You can help a young adult (18-24) pursue their education and employment goals! Our friends at the SF LGBT Center are recruiting community members in the city to host youth who need a safe place to stay while finding stable housing. Be one of 10-15 volunteers this year! For more information email hosthomes@sfccenter.org or call/text 415-852-2059.