Flame Retardants in Baby Products: What You Can Do

What’s the problem with flame retardants?

Flame retardant chemicals are added to the foam of baby products and furniture to meet the California Furniture Flammability Standard Technical Bulletin 117 (TB117).

They have been linked with:
- Reduced IQ
- Learning disorders
- Reduced fertility
- Thyroid disruption
- Cancer

The average American home can contain pound levels of these chemicals. They have been detected in the bodies of nearly all North Americans tested.

How are we exposed?

1. Chemicals leak from products into dust

2. Dust gets on hands and food

3. Hands and food get put into mouths

Who is most vulnerable?

Fetuses, infants, and toddlers are the most vulnerable because of their hand-to-mouth behavior and proximity to the floor.

They are also most vulnerable to the toxic effects of these chemicals since their organs are still developing.

Do they prevent fires?

The California standard TB117 has not been shown to improve fire safety and is thus presenting an unnecessary health hazard.

- Baby products do not pose a fire hazard
- According to the National Fire Protection Association, their use in California has not led to a measurable improvement in fire safety
- Flame retardants may decrease fire safety since they increase the amount of carbon monoxide and toxic gases produced when a product does burn

Why are they still used in baby products and furniture?

The producers of the flame retardant chemicals spend millions of dollars lobbying at the state and federal levels to create and maintain regulations like TB117 which are favorable to their industry.
Products we tested

80% of the baby products we tested contained toxic or untested flame retardants.

Products with these retardants detected included: nursing pillows, car seats, sleeping wedges, portable crib mattresses, baby carriers, strollers, and changing table pads.

How to protect your family

1) Keep dust levels down by wet mopping and vacuuming with a HEPA filter.

2) Wash your hands and those of your children often, as hand-to-mouth contact exposes us to flame retardants in dust.

3) Purchase baby products and furniture filled with cotton, polyester, or wool instead of polyurethane foam.

4) Avoid products that use polyurethane foam and have a TB117 label, which likely contain chemical flame retardants.

5) Write or call the manufacturer to inquire whether flame retardants were added to the product.

Some safe brands:
- BabyLuxe organic pads and mattresses
- BabyBjorn baby carriers
- OrbitBaby strollers and car seats
- Boppy nursing pillows

What should be done?

Demand toxic-free products for your family

Sample letters at: www.greensciencepolicy.org/safekids

1. Tell the California Bureau that implements the TB117 standard that needs to be updated so products are fire-safe and non-toxic. Contact:

Bureau of Electronic and Appliance Repair, Home Furnishings and Thermal Insulation
Email: homeproducts@dca.ca.gov
Phone: (916) 574-2041
Fax: (916) 574-2043
3485 Orange Grove Avenue
North Highlands, California 95660

2. Contact California state Senators and Assembly Members and demand to be able to choose fire safe and non-toxic products for your family. Your voice does matter.

Legislators contact information: www.leginfo.ca.gov/yourleg.html

About Us

The Green Science Policy Institute (GSP) provides unbiased scientific information to facilitate more informed decision-making about chemicals used in consumer products in order to protect health and environment worldwide.

Our accomplishments include:
- Prevented over a billion pounds of unneeded flame retardants in electronic housings each year
- Suspended California TB 604, a proposed flammability regulation for bed coverings and pillows
- US Green Building Council LEED Pilot Credit for not using halogenated flame retardants inside buildings

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