

# Plastic hysteria drives efforts to phase phthalates out

By ACSH Staff — October 20, 2010

The European Environmental Bureau (EEB) — a consortium of 140 environmental activist groups — [calls for](#) [1] an expansion of European chemical disclosure rules beyond kids' toys after finding “elevated” levels of phthalates in everyday products like erasers and pencil cases. EEB claims that the plastic-softening chemicals are to blame for health effects including genital abnormalities in children and declines in male fertility.

ACSH's Dr. Gilbert Ross points out that ACSH [intensively evaluated phthalates with our “Blue-Ribbon Panel” in 1999](#) [2]. “We found that the phthalate in rubber duckies, DINP, and DEHP in flexible medical devices, were both safe in commonly encountered products, for children and adults. That panel consisted of 17 world-renowned experts, chaired by former Surgeon General Dr. C. Everett Koop. This renewed anti-phthalate alarm is just another flare-up of baseless junk science.”

Adds ACSH's Dr. Elizabeth Whelan: “There is no effective substitute for DEHP, but they don't seem to care about that. And most importantly, the data showing potential human health risk from phthalates is miniscule or hypothetical. The study cited in the article — the 2005 Shanna Swan study that suggests phthalates cause male genital abnormalities — has been discredited by the general scientific community because the experiment mixed different phthalates, conjured a parameter called anogenital distance, and none of the babies had any kind of deformity. And then they say there's widespread evidence that male fertility and sperm counts have gone way down. There is no such data — that's a rumor and a myth. I've researched this. The largest studies, including the study authored by a Columbia University group led by Dr. Harry Fisch, do not show any increase in male genital abnormalities. Now there is some increase in testicular cancer, which is unusual because most cancer rates have gone down, but to try to stretch that fact to blame phthalates is ridiculous, there's no evidence of that. They just make this stuff up.”

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