

# A Scientifically Baseless Attack On Phthalates

By ACSH Staff — February 18, 2011

Unfounded health scares do nothing to protect the public and ultimately cause more harm than good.

For example, an [article](#) <sup>[1]</sup> posted recently on the *Mother Nature Network* attacks everyday chemicals called phthalates. This group of plasticizing chemicals can be found in a many common products, ranging from children's toys to medical equipment to roofing and flooring.

Contrary to the message in *Mother Nature Network* article, decades of widespread, safe use and epidemiological research has found that these compounds are not harmful for anyone, of any age, at typical environmental exposures. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) did a bio-monitoring study and found that the general public's exposure to phthalates are at levels deemed safe by regulatory agencies. In addition, ACSH conducted a Blue Ribbon Panel Report on the effect of two phthalate plasticizers – DEHP and DINP - used in medical devices and toys. The scientific evaluation, led by former surgeon general C. Everett Koop, found that DEHP is not harmful to exposed people and DINP used in children's products is safe for its intended use. Furthermore, making the claim that chemicals in the phthalate family are “known to be endocrine disruptors” is a gross generalization. According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) two of the most widely used phthalates, DINP and DIDP, are not considered endocrine disruptors.

Such politically-generated attacks are aimed at pressuring lawmakers and regulators into unscientific restrictions, and even bans, of plastic products in general use which, in turn, can cause harmful unintended consequences. And, interestingly, the article does not even consider what the chemical alternatives to phthalates might be — and what its safety profile is. Even a Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) scientist – Marilyn Wind – emphasized that the phthalate DINP was safe and evidence clearly indicated there was no health risk for children, while banning DINP might actually lead to weaker or more brittle plastics being used, which could result in a choking hazard to children. Further, phthalates that make plastic more flexible have been godsend for doctors and patients who need medical products as diverse as intravenous tubes, blood collection bags, and shunts to drain fluid from operative sites.

Phthalates pose no known adverse health effects — and activist groups and their publications should stop scaring the public about them — and re-focus their emphasis on the many real and known threats to human health.

**Source URL:** <https://www.acsh.org/news/2011/02/18/a-scientifically-baseless-attack-on-phthalates>

**Links**

[1] <http://www.mnn.com/lifestyle/natural-beauty-fashion/stories/chemicals-in-cosmetics>