



PBDEs

What they are and what you can do.

You are here: [DOH Home](#) » [EH](#) » [OEHA](#) » [PBDE \(Polybrominate Diphenyl Ethers\)](#) » [PBDE Uses](#) » [PBDE in the Environment](#) » [PBDE & Human Health](#) » [PBDE & Avoiding Exposure](#)

[Search](#) | [Employees](#)

Site Directory:

PBDEs: Information about flame retardants in the environment

• [Back to main page](#)

• [Fish Advisories](#)

• [Master Home Environmentalist](#)

• [Department of Ecology PBDE](#)

• [PBDE Chemical Action Plan](#)

• [References](#)

• [Resources](#)

Environmental Health Links

• [Division of Environmental Health Hotlines](#)

• [Learn more about the Division of Environmental Health](#)

• [Alternative File Format Information](#)



What can we do to avoid exposure to PBDEs?

Because of the rapidly rising levels of PBDEs in the environment, their similarity to other toxic chemicals, and the data from animal studies, people may want to take action to limit their exposure. The best, long-term way to deal with harmful chemicals is to support policies and programs in your community that help reduce environmental pollution.

Limiting exposure to harmful chemicals

It is especially important for women who are of child bearing age to limit their exposure to PBDEs and other harmful chemicals. The most critical period of exposure to many toxic chemicals happens during development in the womb and infancy.

PBDEs are found throughout the environment, but the exact ways that they get into our bodies are not known. Until more research is done, we cannot be certain about how to prevent exposure.

The Washington Department of Health recommends these guidelines, which are known to help reduce exposure to many chemicals and allergens in your home:

Cleaning and Dusting

- Keep indoor living and working spaces free of dust. Dust can also contain lead and other metals, pesticides and allergens including mold and dust mites.
- Avoid stirring up dust when you vacuum and clean. The way you dust and the kind of vacuum you use make a difference. To learn more, contact the Master Home Environmentalist Program of the [American Lung Association of Washington State](#).
- Properly ventilate living and working spaces, especially while you clean. This might include opening up windows and doors, or using properly installed fans.
- Wash your hands after cleaning and dusting.



- Remove shoes when entering the house. This helps prevent tracking in unwanted chemicals from outside, including lead and pesticides.



Repairing, Recycling and Remodeling

- Cover or replace cushions on sofas, chairs and car seats where the foam pads are exposed.
- Properly recycle or dispose of furniture, mattresses, rugs, draperies and carpet padding, and all electronic equipment. Contact the Recycling Hotline at 1-800-732-9253.
- Avoid tracking construction dust into living areas during home remodeling. Pregnant women and young children should avoid dust from construction and remodeling projects, which may also contain lead.
- Try to contain dust and particles when replacing foam padding beneath carpets. Wear protective clothing and a respirator

Foods

- Follow the advice of Washington's Fish Advisories. Current advisories exist for PCBs and mercury.
- Prepare fish and meats in ways that reduce the amount of fat. PBDEs concentrate in the fat of fish and in other fatty meats.
- Wash your hands before and after preparing food.
- Know that breastfeeding is the healthiest choice for babies and mothers. The [Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies Web page](#) has more.



Reduce PBDEs in the environment

The best, long-term way to deal with harmful chemicals is to support policies and programs in your community that help reduce environmental pollution.

Citizens can get involved in programs and policies to protect people and the environment from harmful chemicals. In Washington state, we are looking at all feasible solutions to keep PBDEs out of the environment.

In January 2004, Governor Gary Locke directed the Washington State Department of Ecology, in coordination with the Department of Health, to draft a plan to manage PBDEs. Public comment period on the draft plan runs from October 11, 2004 through November 9, 2004.

You can review the [PBDE Chemical Action Plan](#) and send comments to the Department of Ecology. The final PBDE Chemical Action Plan is due to the Governor by December 1, 2004.

If you would like to learn more about PBDEs or get involved in reducing toxic

chemicals in the environment, go to our list of [additional resources](#).



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Washington State Department of Health
Division of Environmental Health
Office of Environmental Health Assessments
PO Box 47846 Olympia, Washington, 98504-7846
1.877.485.7316

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