

Consumer Fact Sheet

Triclosan

Environmental & Occupational Health Assessment Program

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Overview

Triclosan is a chemical used in consumer products to kill germs. However, it does not have a clear benefit over using soap and water. Further, it is taken up by the body and may affect hormones and increase the risk for allergies.



Children may be particularly sensitive. Parents should make sure that products purchased for use by children are free of triclosan.

This includes toothpaste, mouthwash, hand soap, shampoo, lotions, creams and deodorant. Adults should only use triclosan-containing products under the advice of their doctor or dentist.

Several manufacturers are phasing out triclosan but it is still present in many products.

What is Triclosan?

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) considers Triclosan a pesticide. For many years, hospitals have used the pesticide to keep surfaces germ-free. In recent years its use in consumer products has increased. Some detergents, soaps, skin cleansers, deodorants, lotions, creams, toothpaste, mouthwash, and dishwashing liquids contain Triclosan. It also may be in cutting boards, clothing, and plastics that go into furniture and toys.

Why Triclosan Poses a Health Concern

Triclosan can alter the way the hormones in your body work. It may affect male and female reproduction as well as the thyroid. It may increase a child's risk of developing allergies. While more research is needed, levels of exposure common in the general population present a concern. Children may be more sensitive and their exposures may be greater because they might swallow toothpaste. In addition, chemicals more easily pass through children's skin.

KEY POINTS:

- Triclosan is classified by the EPA as a pesticide.
- There is no evidence that triclosan provides any benefit over washing hands with normal soap and water.
- The chemical gets taken up by the body and may affect hormones and increase the risk for allergies.
- Children may be particularly sensitive.
- Avoid triclosan when buying products for children.

Is Triclosan Necessary?

There is no evidence that triclosan in soaps or cutting boards provides more protection than normal washing with soap and water. Kaiser Permanente has removed triclosan from its chain of 37 hospitals. This shows that it may not necessary even in a hospital setting. The only clear benefit is in adult toothpaste where triclosan can slow gum disease. However, this is not needed in children as gum disease is not typical at this age. Adults may want to check with their dentist about whether they need toothpaste which contains triclosan.

What Should You Do to Keep Children Safe?

Avoid using triclosan-containing products for children. These include:

- Triclosan-containing toothpaste: Do not use adult toothpaste for children. Make sure children only have access to triclosan-free toothpaste.
- Triclosan-containing soap, mouthwash, shampoo, lotion, and deodorant: It should be easier to avoid triclosan in the future as more manufacturers phase it out. But for now, look for it on the label and seek triclosan-free products. Antibacterial liquid or bar soaps may contain triclosan.
- Triclosan-containing cutting boards: Do not consider these germ-safe.

Read the Label

Remember, manufacturers of products with triclosan must list it as an ingredient on the label. Avoid triclosan when buying products for children.

Make sure I am triclosan-free!



FDA Review and AMA Advisory

The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has proposed new rules requiring makers of triclosan products to prove its safety. Other agencies in the US and Europe are studying the effects of this chemical. The American Medical Association has advised against the use of triclosan and similar pesticides in consumer products because they may breed bacteria that are resistant to antibiotics.

Recent actions by manufacturers indicate concern over triclosan. Johnson & Johnson and Proctor and Gamble have announced phase-outs of triclosan from their personal care products by 2014-2015.

For More Information

Dept. of Public Health - 860-509-7740

[DPH Triclosan Technical Fact Sheet](#)

