

# What You Should Know About Flame Retardant Chemicals



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Researching the Environment and Women's Health

## What are flame retardant chemicals?

Furniture, textiles, electronics, children's products, and building materials often contain flame retardant chemicals. These chemicals migrate out of furniture into air and dust, and ultimately end up in people's bodies. Infants and young children are particularly vulnerable since they crawl and play on the floor, where contaminated dust settles, and frequently put their hands in their mouths.

## What are the health risks?

Exposure to flame retardants has been linked with cancer, thyroid disease, decreased fertility, and lower IQ. Firefighters are especially at risk. During a fire, they breathe in a soup of toxic chemicals and are routinely exposed to high levels of flame retardants. Compared with the rest of the population, firefighters have significantly higher rates of cancer.

## How can I reduce my exposure?



- ✓ Ask for flame retardant-free. When shopping for new furniture, ask for furniture free of flame retardant chemicals and look for items with the TB117-2013 label that says "NO added flame retardants."
- ✓ If it's ripped, fix it. Make sure the foam in your furniture is not exposed since exposed foam can release even more chemicals into your home.
- ✓ Go natural. Choose carpet and rug pads made from natural materials such as felt, jute, or rubber.
- ✓ Get rid of dust. Vacuum regularly using a strong vacuum with a motorized brush and HEPA filter. Wipe surfaces with a wet cloth or mop.
- ✓ Wash hands frequently. It reduces the amount of flame retardants that enter our bodies.
- ✓ Buy snug-fitting pajamas. Look for children's pajamas that come with a tag that says, "This garment is not flame resistant."

