



## 1. What are flame retardants and where can I find them?

Flame retardants are man-made chemicals added to consumer products to make them less likely to catch fire. They are often added to the following products:

- Furniture foam
- Mattresses
- Carpet padding
- Drapery and upholstery
- Plastics
- Televisions
- Computers
- Car stereos
- Padded dashboards
- Car seats

The most common chemical flame retardants added to consumer products are polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDEs). These chemicals are found at low levels throughout the indoor and outdoor environment.

## 2. How might I be exposed to flame retardants?

People may be exposed to flame retardants found in the soil, water, indoor air and dust. People may also be exposed by eating food products from animals that may consume these chemicals in the environment. These animals may include fish, cows and pigs.

## 3. How can flame retardants affect my health?

There is no clear evidence of undesirable effects or of increased disease in humans exposed to flame retardants. Effects on behavioral and nervous system development, as well as on the liver and thyroid, have been observed in studies on experimental animals exposed to flame retardants. Limited evidence suggests that flame retardants may cause cancer in laboratory animals.

## 4. How can I reduce my exposure to flame retardants?

- Several electronics and furniture manufacturers make products that do not contain flame retardants. Ask retailers about these products before you make a new purchase.
- Clean your house often, especially if you have young children who may have increased contact with house dust when playing on the floor or furniture. Keep children's areas dust free.
- Cover or replace exposed carpet padding or foam pads on upholstered furniture and car seats.

### Sources

1. *Flame Retardants*. L.A. Department of Public Health. <http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/tox/>
2. *PBDEs*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <http://www.cdc.gov/Environmental/>
3. *PBDEs*. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency <http://www.epa.gov/>

For additional resources, please visit the L.A. County Department of Public Health website <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov>.