

# Back-to-School Health

Understanding everyday toxicants and how you can minimize your exposure



## Additional Resources

Learn more about the chemicals in your everyday products and environment:

**The Environmental Working Group:** [www.ewg.org](http://www.ewg.org)

**Explore our website:** [www.seed-program.org](http://www.seed-program.org)

**Contact & Follow us:**  
[SEED@hsph.harvard.edu](mailto:SEED@hsph.harvard.edu)  
(Twitter and Instagram)  
[@drmesserlian](https://twitter.com/drmesserlian)



**HARVARD T.H. CHAN**  
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

## How can I minimize my exposure?



### LUNCHES

- Wash your hands often, especially after electronics; rinse produce and buy organic
- Do not use plastic storage containers or plastic bags

### SCHOOL SUPPLIES

- Avoid scented and plastic school supplies (e.g., plastic rulers and plastic notebooks)
- Look for wood or metal alternatives for school supplies

### CLOTHING

- Do not use synthetic dyes and clothes packaged in plastic
- Avoid waterproof coatings, stain repellents, SPF, and wrinkle-resistant clothing

- Look for these labels:



# EDCs

Endocrine-disrupting chemicals (EDCs) interrupt normal hormonal activity by mimicking, blocking, or altering hormones and changing the way that they function in the body.

EDCs include phthalates, phenols, per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), and other toxicants. Some EDCs are rapidly removed from the body, while others can remain in the body for a long time. Most people are exposed to multiple EDCs daily, allowing these chemicals to remain at harmful concentrations.

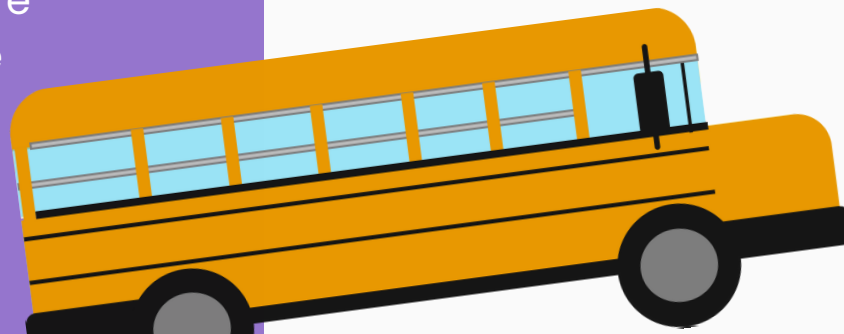


## These chemicals are harmful



**Current research suggests that EDCs, including PFAS, lead to adverse health effects. These chemicals can:**

- ✗ Alter reproductive health
- ✗ Reduce immune function
- ✗ Increase cancer risk
- ✗ Change metabolic function
- ✗ Decrease brain function



EDCs are commonly found in processed foods, plastic toys and household items, electronics, waterproof clothing, personal care and cosmetic products, cleaning supplies, and more.

Washing your hands with chemical and fragrance-free soaps reduces exposure, especially for children's hand-to-mouth behavior.

## EDCs are everywhere



Personal care products, dental products, nail polish, and cosmetics



Scented and or plastic school supplies



Takeout containers, plastic packaging, canned foods and beverages, and plastic kitchen and storage items



Plastic toys and electronics



Waterproof, wrinkle-resistant, and stain repellents clothing; synthetic dyes



Disinfectants, antibacterial soaps, and household cleaning supplies