



Chemicals in our products and environment

As explained by the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#), more than [40,000 chemicals](#) are used in the United States' commerce. Many of these chemicals are circulating in our food, air, and water and some negatively affect the health of children. Unfortunately, very [few of these chemicals](#) have been adequately assessed by the United States Environmental Protection Agency for safety.

Biomonitoring data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and other scientific documentation demonstrates that there is [widespread human exposure](#) to many of these substances. These chemicals are found throughout the tissues and body fluids of children and adults alike, including in blood, cord blood, and human milk.

The primary federal law that governs chemical management in the United States is the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA). For most of its history, the law has not been protective of the health of children and pregnant women. TSCA was amended in 2017. Reports indicate that budget shortfalls have made it difficult for the EPA to implement some of the required changes, and the agency has [missed key deadlines](#) to [evaluate chemicals](#). Given the pace of review under the law, [it could take centuries for the EPA to test](#) all unregulated chemicals as required by the 2017 amendments. For the most part, [federal law does not ensure that chemicals used in the marketplace today will be reviewed for safety any time soon](#).

In 2008, California stepped into the chemical policy void when the state created the Safer Consumer Products Program (SCPP), a program designed to regulate products that contain hazardous chemicals. But the SCPP has accomplished little in its decade of existence. Since the state program's establishment ago, [only seven product-chemical combinations](#), out of the tens of thousands of potentially hazardous product-chemicals in the California market, have been regulated.

Food Chemicals -- What is in our food?

Unlike pharmaceutical drugs, [food chemicals are not always proactively reviewed for safety](#) by the federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and sometimes they are used in food even if they are [linked to serious health harms](#). For decades, the [FDA has allowed food and chemical companies to decide](#) whether most food chemicals are safe. [A recent analysis found 99 percent](#) of the chemicals in food that have entered the marketplace since 2000 were greenlighted by industry scientists, not the FDA.

Even when the FDA has reviewed chemicals for safety, it rarely re-evaluates old decisions – even if there is new evidence of their health harms because there is no requirement directing the FDA to periodically double check the safety of food chemicals. As a result, many of the 10,000 chemicals we consume in a host of foods and beverages every day have not been reviewed by the FDA for safety for decades, if ever. [And pledges by the FDA](#) to conduct safety reviews often go unfulfilled.

Other countries, such as those in the European Union, [methodically review and rereview](#) the safety of many food chemicals, including problematic ones such titanium dioxide, glutamates, sulfur dioxide, sulfites, artificial sweeteners, colors, and phosphates. As a result of these reviews, the EU has withdrawn approval for, or adjusted the acceptable limits of, many food chemicals that had previously been considered safe for use in food. [Food sold in the United States](#), however, is not subject to the rational restrictions instituted by the EU.

[HR 123 \(Reyes\)](#) recognizes October as Children's Environmental Health Month, and in order to raise policymaker awareness of the environmental issues threatening children's health in California, this document was prepared as part of a 2023 legislative briefing co-sponsored by: Children Now; Environmental Working Group; Pesticide Action Network of North America; Families Advocating for Pesticide and Toxic Chemicals Safety; Undaunted K12; and Regional Asthma Management & Prevention

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