

## This year, make a change!

How do you relate to phthalates? What about BPA? More specifically, how successful has your facility been in decreasing the exposure risks from these chemicals to patients and staff? Is there a policy in place at your institution to try to reduce the phthalate and bisphenol A (BPA) exposure? Are you even concerned about these chemicals? Well you should be. Their presence has become an *iatrogenic issue*.

Numerous legitimate medical research<sup>1,2,3</sup> and review articles<sup>4,5</sup> documenting the etiology, presence, and the potential risks from exposure to “active” phthalates and BPA have been published. The National Toxicology Program (NTP) and the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) have brought the risks of exposure to these agents, using both animal and human research, to the attention of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services<sup>6</sup>. The NIEHS<sup>7</sup> has shown “concern” at different levels for both types of products. In addition, the lay press is well aware of the potential harm from these environmental hazards. TODAY Health, as a part of TODAY show.com<sup>8</sup>, Healthy Child Healthy World<sup>9</sup> and CBS News’ 60 Minutes<sup>10</sup> have all discussed the potential harmful effects from phthalates. The information is “out there.”

Although phthalates are said to be ubiquitous, we need to do our part in trying to decrease exposure to these compounds as much as possible. That means we should not be using products that contain the active phthalates (DEHP, DINP, DBP, DEP, and DIP.) New phthalates should be regarded as “suspicious” until we know to what degree the compounds “leech” into the patient. Just because they may not be as “active” doesn’t mean that they can’t cause harm. PVC or vinyl can contain phthalates and should not be used if there is a safer alternative. BPA is the major constituent in polycarbonate plastics and should not be used unless there is no alternative.

All plastic products, personal products, beverage containers and medical products should be screened for phthalates and BPA using the Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Units recommendations shown in their publications<sup>11,12</sup>. “Tips on Teaching Patients & Parents How to Avoid Exposure”, found in the same publication, are also excellent and worth noting.

This year, make a change. Let’s give our patients and staff as “phthalate-free” and “BPA free” a year as possible. If you have any questions about how to do so, contact Sandy Winkler or myself at Marian Medical, Inc.

Samuel M. Sefton, M.D. FAAP

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