

What's Ailing You? Could it be Your Mattress?

Are We Paying Attention to What We Let Come into Our Homes?

The average American consumer pays little attention to the detailed minutiae regarding the contents of an ordinary mattress. More and more attention is being paid to what's in our food supply and what we are willing to consume, while that which surrounds us and comes into contact with us in some of our most sacred settings, such as in our bedroom, is often overlooked.

Some of the following facts may be worth looking into, however. Being blissfully unaware of these things is not a recipe for a successfully clean, healthful, and organic lifestyle.

Did you know there are a number of known (and probable) carcinogens as well as other toxins in a traditional innerspring or polyurethane mattress? Some of these chemicals include benzene, boric acid, antimony, formaldehyde, and decabromodiphenyl oxide. There are more, but let's focus on just these few, and take a look at each of these chemicals individually.

The Intruders

Benzene is one of the 20 most commonly used chemicals in the United States. It is a known carcinogen. Benzene can also cause drowsiness, dizziness, rapid heart rate, headaches, tremors, confusion, and unconsciousness; it may be harmful to reproductive organs.

Boric acid is a pesticide commonly used for killing cockroaches. It is used in mattresses as a flame retardant. Many sources deny that it has any ill effects on a person, but some doctors beg to differ. [1].

Antimony is used as a preservative and fire retardant. According to Midwifery Today[2], in baby mattresses especially, this chemical can combine with a common household fungus, arising from a baby's sweat and spit up, and result in three nerve gasses – phosphine, arsine, and stibine – which can be deadly to infants. Antimony can be found in both baby mattresses and adult mattresses, and in the case of a baby mattress, it is recommended to wrap it with a gas impermeable plastic to keep the gasses from contaminating the sleeping area.

Formaldehyde is used to produce many household products. The EPA lists formaldehyde as a probable carcinogen (with high or prolonged exposure). Some of the adverse effects of formaldehyde may be watery eyes, burning sensations in the eyes, nose, and throat, coughing, wheezing, nausea, and skin irritation.

Decabromodiphenyl oxide is a flame retardant used to protect many different types of products and materials from the risk of fire. Older mattresses (prior to 2009) generally contain this agent as part of the fire barrier; unfortunately, however, many of the alternatives to deca-BDE are arguably just as harmful.

Mattress Off Gassing and Its Extension of the Problem

One of the main ways that a person is affected by the above-mentioned chemicals in their mattress, besides casual contact, is with off gassing. Off gassing from a mattress is when a chemical agent or agents are released as a gas from being

dissolved, trapped or absorbed inside of the mattress. There are many VOC's (volatile organic compounds) that typically off gas inside of a bedroom after a new (traditional-type) mattress is purchased.

A guest book[3] on the website Chem-Tox.com reports the experiences of 235 people who have had some adverse side effects, presumably from the types of chemicals discussed above, found in traditional mattresses and pillows.

Natural Solutions

The outlook isn't all negative. Happily, there are available natural solutions to the status quo being provided in the marketplace. Some of these include mattresses made from botanical latex sap. Natural latex is hypoallergenic, mold and mildew proof, dust mite resistant, and antibacterial. Other natural ingredients used in mattress cores by natural mattress manufacturers may include wool, cotton, horsehair, flax, tufted hemp, buckwheat hulls, millet hulls, and coconut coir. These are all acceptable alternatives, provided they have not been treated with the same harsh petrochemicals discussed above. Beware of greenwashing. One can usually safely navigate through purported claims of natural and organic by looking out for certifications by reputable governing bodies. GreenGuard certification and USDA Organic certification are just a couple of the more trusted types of certifications that consumers may look for in their search for a healthier mattress.



Additional Sources:

1. <http://articles.mercola.com>
2. <http://www.midwiferytoday.com>
3. <http://www.chem-tox.com>

Related Products:

- [Green Lifestyle Market – Home](#)

Related Reading:

- [Textile Industry's Health and Environmental Impacts – What Are You Wearing?](#)
- [Corporations, Our Health, and a History of Failed Technologies](#)
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- [Insomnia – A Comprehensive Look with Natural Remedies](#)
- [Charges Brought upon Doctor and Advocate for Toxic Flame Retardant Chemicals](#)
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