

Ingredient Spotlight - Phthalates: Hidden Harm in Everyday Items

I often hear the word “phthalates” (pronounced thal-eights), usually followed by warnings about health risks. I decided to dig a little deeper and find out what phthalates really are, and why we should be concerned.

Phthalates are a large group of chemicals, used to make plastics flexible and durable. They are found in an array of products - cosmetics, solvents, food packaging, building products like flooring and wall coverings, as well as many other items. Their presence is so widespread they’re often called the “everywhere chemical”.

These hidden chemicals pose potential health risks. Studies have linked phthalates to health problems such as reproductive issues, respiratory problems, certain types of cancers, and developmental issues in children. They are also considered Endocrine disruptors, meaning that they can interfere with the body’s hormone system, leading to various health issues.

What’s more, phthalates are not chemically bound to plastics, which means that they can easily leach out of products and enter our bodies through ingestion, inhalation and skin absorption.

Phthalates are everywhere, and it seems almost impossible to avoid coming into contact with them.

So, how can we reduce our exposure at home?

Opt for glass, ceramic or stainless steel to store food. Avoid PVC toys and vinyl flooring. Avoid products with the ingredients “fragrance” and “parfum”, as these ingredients often contain phthalates. And avoid microwaving food with plastic, as the heat can accelerate leaching.

The good news is that the UK does have regulations in place to restrict the use of certain phthalates, particularly in children's products and cosmetics. However, even with these regulations, exposure can still happen.

By being mindful of the products you use and prioritising natural alternatives, you can create a healthier, less toxic home environment for yourself and your family.