

Take Action Against Polyvinyl Chloride (PVC)!

Help Reduce Use of the “Poison Plastic”

An Action by Green Sangha *

What is PVC plastic?

Polyvinyl chloride (often called vinyl, or PVC) is one of the most commonly used plastics in the world. It is found in a wide range of consumer products such as packaging, cling wrap, bottles, furniture, binders, pens, imitation leather, window frames, siding, flooring, wallpaper, window blinds, car interiors, toys, and shower curtains. It is a vinyl polymer composed of hydrogen, carbon, and chlorine. Resistant to fire and water, when burned it releases chlorine atoms.

PVC plastic bottles are identified by the resin code **3** inside a triangle, with the letters **V** or **PVC** below the triangle, usually stamped on the bottom of the bottle.

What's wrong with PVC?

- ENVIRONMENTAL HARM results from the manufacture, breakdown, and burning of PVC. It is one of the world's largest sources of dioxins, which are among the most toxic chemicals ever released into the environment. Dioxins are created and released during the PVC manufacturing process, and also when the plastic is burned in incinerators, household stoves, or open landfills. Accidental fires in buildings and vehicles containing PVC plastic pipes, flooring, siding, and interior fixtures also release dioxins and other chlorine compounds. In proposing national emission standards for hazardous air pollutants in December 2000, the US EPA noted that vinyl chloride is classified as a known human carcinogen, and that all hazardous air pollutants can cause non-cancer health effects as well.
- HEALTH RISKS from dioxins are compounded by other toxic contaminants such as phthalates, lead, and cadmium that are added to PVC to make it soft and colorful. PVC consumer products can be hazardous, since the plasticising agents are not bound to the plastic and can leach out over time through evaporation. Children can also ingest harmful chemicals from chewing PVC toys. Burning or burying this material results in release of these additives into soil, water and air. Of all the plastics, PVC is the most damaging to human health. Throughout its lifecycle it requires hazardous chemicals for production, releases them during manufacturing, and creates toxic wastes when disposed or burned. The hydrochloric acid formed when PVC burns causes life-threatening lung damage.
- PVC IS NOT EASILY RECYCLED, in large part because of the toxic components mentioned above. It also has low resale value. PVC recycling in developed countries amounts to less than 1% of consumption. Although PVC bottles make up only 2% of all bottles manufactured in the USA, they are a serious contaminant when mixed with other plastic bottles in the recycling process. PVC and PET (polyethylene terephthalate, resin code **1** – **PETE**, commonly used for bottled water) are easily confused because both are often clear. No sorting equipment currently available can remove 100% of PVC from a mixture of clear plastic bottles. During the recycling process, even very small amounts of PVC in a batch of PET will reduce its value or make it unusable. At PET's melting temperature, PVC burns, destroying the PET and damaging the processing equipment.

* Green Sangha is a spiritual community committed to environmental action. For more information, please visit www.greensangha.org

What can we do to reduce PVC use?

- **Avoid products packaged in PVC bottles.** Look for the triangular resin code with **3** and **V** or **PVC** on the bottom of the bottle, and leave those on the shelf.
- **Choose alternatives to PVC.** For information, visit www.MyHouselsYourHouse.org and www.healthybuilding.org
- **Write, call, or e-mail** the product manufacturers listed below. Request that they switch from PVC to a more environmentally friendly packaging material.
- **Inform yourself and others** about the problems that arise from manufacturing, using, and disposing of PVC. Information presented here was excerpted and reworked from several sources, including:
Northern California Recycling Association (www.ncrarecycles.org)
Greenpeace (www.greenpeace.org/international/en)
U S Environmental Protection Agency (www.epa.gov)
"Blue Vinyl" by Judith Helfand and Daniel B Gold (www.bluevinyl.org).

PLEASE contact these companies to request that they use non-PVC packaging --

Hunt Wesson, Inc.
Canagra Brands
P O Box 4800
Fullerton, CA 92834

**Product: Canola Oil (2 qt)
Vegetable Oil (2 & 3 qt)**

The Gatorade Company
P O Box 049003
Chicago, IL 60604-9003
Note: Gatorade bottles are PET, but the labels are PVC!
800/88GATOR
www.gatorade.com
Product: Gatorade labels

Hawaiian Tropic
Tanning Research Labs
P O Box 26511
Daytona Beach, FL 32126
Product: Aloe Vera Gel

The Clorox Company
Oakland, CA
800/292-2200
Product: Fresh Care

Pure & Basic Products
20600 Belshaw Ave
Carson, CA
800/432-3787
Product: Bath & Body Wash

Carnation/Nestle
Glendale, CA 91203
Note: Nestle bottles are PET, but the labels are PVC!
800/637-8534
www.nestleusa.com
**Product: Coffee Mate
Creamer labels**

H J Heinz Company
EZ Squirt
Pittsburgh, PA 15212
Product: Ketchup

Solarcain Aloe
Schering Plough Health Care,
Inc.
Memphis, TN 38151
Product: Aloe Vera Gel

L A Research (Packaging)
P O Box 92859
Los Angeles, CA 90009
www.lalooks.com
L A Looks Styling Gel

Vital Care of N. America
16035 E. Arrow Hwy
Irwindale, CA 91706-2049
www.keybrands.com
**Product: Vital Care Styling
Gel**

DEP
Schwarzkopf & DEP, Inc.
Division of Henkel Corp.
Rancho Dominguez, CA
90220
www.dep.com
Product: DEP Styling Gel

Prell
Prestige Brands International
Bonita Springs, FL 34134
800/33-PRELL
Product: Prell Shampoo

Cary's Specialty Brands of
America
1400 Old County Rd
Westbury, NY 11590
516/333-9326
Product: Sugar-free Syrup

V05 Alberto-Culver USA
Melrose Park, IL 60160
Product: V05 Shampoo

San Francisco Soap Co.
J B Williams Company, Inc.
Glen Rock, NJ 07452
Product: Bath & Shower Gel