Protecting children from harmful chemicals

Did you know that children are usually more sensitive to toxic chemicals than adults?

- Their young brains are vulnerable to more chemicals.
- Their bodies can't flush out harmful chemicals as fast.
- For their size, children drink more water and breathe more air.
- Crawling and hand-to-mouth behavior can increase the amount of chemicals in their bodies.
- Exposure to toxic chemicals as a child can have lifelong effects.

ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education

www.humanservices.arkansas.gov

ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Environmental Epidemiology

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Arkansas Department of Health

Choosing Safe Locations for Child Care Facilities

www.healthy.arkansas.gov

Environmental and chemical hazards

Health and safety is an essential part of child care. You protect children from cuts, bad food, and germs - but what about harmful chemicals in their environment? These can make children sick. Chemicals in the building, air, water, and soil may be dangerous to children and your business.

How do I know if there are toxic chemicals at my child care facility?

Some toxic chemicals can be smelled or tasted. Others can't. The best thing to do is research your property.

- ✓ Find out what the property was used for in the past, and whether any chemicals were used on the site.
- ✓ Find out if any nearby businesses use chemicals.
- ✓ Test for lead-based paint, asbestos, and radon.

Where can toxic chemicals come from?

1. Chemicals from previous uses of the property

When businesses like factories, dry cleaners, and warehouses close, they can leave behind toxic chemicals in the air, soil, and water.

2. Chemicals from nearby businesses, highways, and railroads

Chemicals from nearby businesses can move into your air, soil, or water. Even something like a nail salon can be a problem if it shares a ventilation system with your child care facility.

3. Chemicals used in construction

Before 1978, building materials that had lead and asbestos were widely sold in the United States. These harmful chemicals can still remain in older buildings.

4. Naturally occurring chemicals

Some chemicals, like arsenic and radon gas, are naturally occurring in certain areas underground. These chemicals can move into buildings in air and water.

5. Chemicals you use

Cleaning products, bug spray, and weed killers can all be dangerous if not used properly.

Contact the Arkansas Department of Health for expert help

Concerned that harmful chemicals may be on your child care facility's property? Contact the Environmental Epidemiology team at the Arkansas Department of Health. Our expertise in toxic chemicals and human health can help you understand the situation and what you can do.

We offer information and recommendations. However, we do not take samples, test for chemicals, or clean up chemicals. Sharing your concerns about chemicals with us is voluntary.

For more information, contact:

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