

DON'T SLEEP ON IT:

Why and How Childcares Should Get Toxic Flame Retardants Out of Nap Mats

Toxic-Free Future Factsheet
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Most childcares use nap mats for children's rest time. Usually the mats are thin foam mattresses with a plastic cover. Unfortunately, these mats appear to be a source of children's exposure to toxic chemicals.

When flame retardants are used in items like furniture and nap mats, they escape into the air and build up in dust. They get into kids and adults from air and when the dust gets on their hands. Flame retardants have been linked to cancer, obesity, and other problems.

Childcare centers that use nap maps with flame retardants have more flame retardants in their dust, and children at these childcares have more flame retardants in their bodies.

Kids shouldn't be sleeping on and breathing in toxic flame retardants. Childcare providers want to create a safe space for children to learn and play, and parents want to protect their kids' health. Is there a solution to this toxic sleep problem?

Our new research answers this question with a big YES. Our research shows parents, childcares, makers of nap mats, and policymakers that switching to nap mats without flame retardants means kids are less exposed to flame retardants.

GOING FLAME RETARDANT FREE IN SEATTLE

Toxic-Free Future worked with seven Seattle-area childcare providers for this project. We wanted to find out if taking out nap mats with flame retardants and replacing them with mats without the chemicals would change the levels of flame retardants in the air and dust.

First, we tested the nap mats in the centers. Six out of seven centers had nap mats containing flame retardants considered harmful to kids' health.

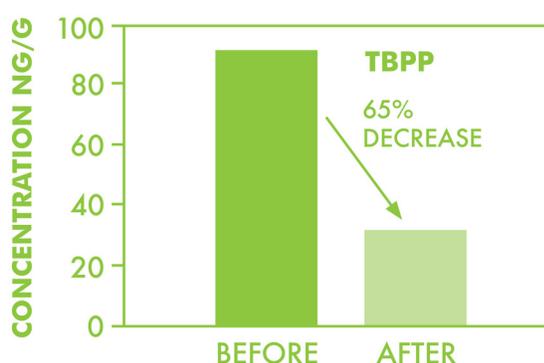
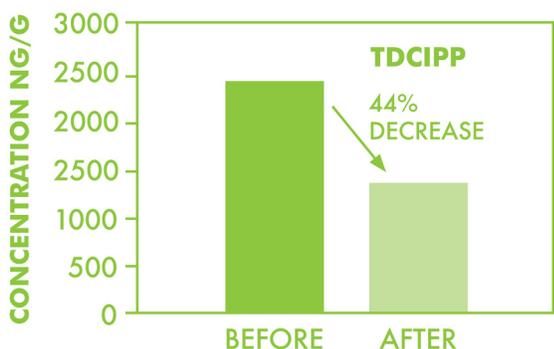
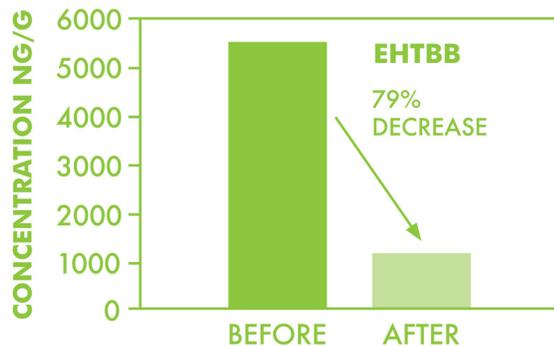
Next, we took air and dust samples from each center, then replaced the mats with flame-retardant-free mats or cots. We waited three months, then took air and dust samples again.

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Researchers collected dust from seven Seattle-area childcares to test for toxic flame retardants.

What we found was surprising. **Our study showed that taking out a single source of flame retardants—nap mats—greatly lowered flame-retardant levels in childcares.**



Amounts of four of the main flame retardants found in nap mats were lower in dust after mats were switched out. We expected the flame-retardant levels to go down, but we didn't expect the difference to be so big. Levels of one flame retardant found in nap mats were 90% lower after switching, and levels of another were 40% lower.

We found we could greatly reduce levels of toxic flame retardants in daycares by with a switch to mats or cots that don't contain the chemicals. These safer alternatives are easy to buy, so lowering kids' risk of health problems toxic flame retardants might cause isn't too difficult.

Nap mats are an important item in childcare centers, and managers should make sure they don't contain toxic flame retardants. Local and state governments can protect kids by helping childcares that need funding to buy safer nap mats, free of toxic flame retardants.

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