Phasing Out Formaldehyde in Children’s Personal Care Products
SF 357 (Rest) / HF 458 (Persell)

What’s the Problem?
We keep hearing about harmful chemicals in children’s products, even though safer alternatives for most products are available. That’s because there is no system in place to assure that toxic chemicals are not used in children’s products. The result is that many toxic chemicals are ending up in a place they shouldn’t, our children’s bodies. Healthy Legacy supports a prohibition on the use of formaldehyde-releasing chemicals in personal care products intended for children under the age of 12.

- **Formaldehyde is on Minnesota Department of Health’s Priority Chemical list.** This is a list of chemicals which are persistent in our environment and bodies and have been found to cause health effects like cancer, reproductive harm or adverse effects on brain development.

- **Exposure to formaldehyde is a public health concern.** Children are exposed to formaldehyde through inhalation and skin absorption. Short-term health effects include irritation of the eyes, nose, throat and skin. When inhaled, formaldehyde can cause wheezing and other respiratory problems. Long-term exposure to formaldehyde is linked with increased risk of cancer, including leukemia and nose and throat cancer. Chronic exposure is also associated with sensitization that can lead to asthma attacks. Exposure is typically through inhalation and an estimated 90% of inhaled formaldehyde is absorbed by the respiratory tract.

- **Children’s personal care products contain formaldehyde.** Personal care products like baby shampoo that contain quanternium-15 can release formaldehyde during use. One study found formaldehyde in 23 of 28 baby bath care products tested. In addition to quanternium-15, formalin, methanol, oxomethylene, urea, formic aldehyde and scores of other chemical preservatives release formaldehyde during use of the product.
What’s the Solution?

In order to reduce our children’s exposure to formaldehyde, we need to ensure children’s personal care products are free of formaldehyde. This legislation requires a phase out of the use of formaldehyde and chemicals that release or degrade into formaldehyde in personal care products designed for children.

- **Products Covered** - Policy would only cover personal care products for children less than 12 years of age. This would include products such as baby shampoo, soap and lotion.

- **Chemical Scope** - The policy covers only formaldehyde and any chemical which degrades into formaldehyde upon use. This would cover chemicals such as quaternium-15 which is used in baby shampoo and degrades into formaldehyde.

- **Time Frame** - Manufacturers could no longer sell these products in Minnesota after January 1, 2014.

- **Replacement Chemicals** - Manufacturers cannot replace formaldehyde in children’s personal care products with another toxic chemical as defined by the Minnesota Department of Health. We shouldn’t be replacing one toxic chemical with another. Potassium sorbate and sodium benzoate are the safest alternatives to quaternium-15 and other formaldehyde-releasing chemicals.

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Citations for information on this fact sheet available upon request. This fact sheet was printed in-house.

Who is Healthy Legacy?

Healthy Legacy is a public health coalition representing over one million Minnesotans that are dedicated to safe products, made safely. Founded by the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy and Clean Water Action, our coalition is comprised of 36 diverse organizations. We educate consumers, work with leading businesses and promote protective polices.

Visit healthylegacy.org for a complete list of our coalition partners.