



# Eco-Healthy Child Care®



Eco-Healthy Child Care® helps early childhood learning environments to be as healthy, safe and green as possible by reducing children's exposure to toxic chemicals.

## Art Supplies

### Health Concerns

Art and craft supplies can contain toxic ingredients that, when used or stored in a play area, create a risk to the health and well-being of children. Lead, asbestos and organic solvents are sometimes used to enhance pigmentation, preserve art products, and to improve application. These toxic ingredients can trigger asthma, allergies, headaches and nausea, especially if used in a poorly ventilated area. Research has shown that some inks, adhesives, pigments and clay may contain chemicals that can cause adverse health effects in adults after occupational exposures. While no studies have shown these negative health effects to occur in children with their limited exposures, care is needed if these supplies are used.

Children are uniquely vulnerable to the health effects associated with exposure to lead, asbestos and organic solvents. It is important to purchase and use supplies that are certified as non-toxic. In addition, young children are more likely than adults to have contact with products on/ in their skin, hair, mouth and eyes; as such, children in grade six and lower should only use non-toxic art and craft materials. Adult supervision is always recommended when young children are using any type of art supplies.

### How Are Children Exposed?

*Inhalation:* The dusts and vapors from art and craft materials can be inhaled, causing: damage to developing lungs, respiratory irritation, and exacerbation of asthma and allergy symptoms.

*Ingestion:* Children are especially vulnerable to ingesting chemicals from art supplies as they regularly put their hands into their mouths.

*Skin and Eye Contact:* Children tend to get art and craft materials on their skin during their creative play. Chemicals in art supplies can be irritating to the skin. Also, children's skin is more permeable than that of adults. Therefore, it is important to wash these products off children's skin immediately after use. Children often touch/rub their eyes, thus increasing the chance that chemicals in art supplies may get into their eye(s).

### Tips for Safer Art & Crafts:

1. Use only non-toxic art supplies approved by the Art & Creative Materials Institute (ACMI). Look for ACMI non-toxic "AP" (Approved Product) seal. You can find a list of these products at [www.acminet.org](http://www.acminet.org).

2. Read labels and identify precautions.
3. Keep the workspace well-ventilated with open screened windows and fans, or take the project outside.
4. Do not allow children to eat or drink while using art and craft materials.
5. Ensure children wear protective smocks and wash their hands thoroughly after using art and craft supplies.
6. Be sure children are closely supervised when using household supplies as art materials to avoid ingestion/improper use.
7. Use flour-based or earth based clay(s).
8. Use plant or food-based dyes such as beet juice or crushed blueberry juice.

### Products to Avoid:

1. Solvent Based Products (markers, oil-based paints and cements) may be extremely flammable and release toxic vapors.

2. Products that contain lead and other heavy metals (some paints, glazes and enamels).
3. Products that can be inhaled, or get into children's eyes, such as: clay (in dry form), powdered paints, wheat paste, and aerosols (spray paint, hair spray).
4. Commercial Dyes
5. Products that are not in original container or without proper labeling (including donated items).
6. Instant Papier-mâché made of powdered paper, which may contain asbestos fibers, lead or other metals from colored printing ink.
7. Permanent felt tip markers or scented markers (hazardous if inhaled or ingested).
8. Polymer-based modeling clays, which are made with polyvinyl chloride (PVC), a potential source of exposure to lead and phthalates.

### Art Supplies Resources

- Art & Creative Materials Institute:  
[www.acminet.org](http://www.acminet.org)
- Guidelines for the safe use of art and craft materials:  
[www.oehha.ca.gov/education/art/index.html](http://www.oehha.ca.gov/education/art/index.html)
- Teacher's classroom checklist:  
[www.epa.gov/iaq/schools/pdfs/kit/checklists/teacherchklistbkgd.pdf](http://www.epa.gov/iaq/schools/pdfs/kit/checklists/teacherchklistbkgd.pdf)

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

**Call: 202-543-4033, ext. 13**

**Email: [ehcc@cehn.org](mailto:ehcc@cehn.org)**

**Visit: [www.cehn.org/ehcc](http://www.cehn.org/ehcc)**

*Eco-Healthy Child Care® is a science-based, award-winning national program that seeks to improve the environmental health of children by partnering with child care professionals to eliminate or reduce environmental health hazards found in child care facilities.*

**Eco-Healthy Child Care®**

c/o Children's Environmental Health Network  
110 Maryland Ave. NE Suite 404 | Washington, DC 20002  
202.543.4033, ext. 13



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