

FORMALDEHYDE

Introduction:

Formaldehyde has a long history of use and is particularly used in the production of plastics. (These are the urea-formaldehyde resins and the phenol-formaldehyde resins.)

FORMALDEHYDE, 37% SOLUTION
FORMALIN

POISON! DANGER!

CAUSES BURNS. HARMFUL IF SWALLOWED, INHALED, OR ABSORBED THROUGH SKIN. MAY CAUSE ALLERGIC SKIN REACTION. COMBUSTIBLE.

Potential cancer hazard. Exercise due care. Keep away from heat, sparks, and flame. Do not get in eyes, on skin, or on clothing. Avoid breathing vapor. Keep in tightly closed container. Use with adequate ventilation. Wash thoroughly after handling.

PRECAUTIONARY STATEMENTS: Vapors may be irritating to skin, eyes, nose, and throat. Inhalation may cause severe irritation of the respiratory system. Contact with skin or eyes may cause severe irritation or burns. Ingestion may cause severe burning to mouth and stomach.

FIRST AID PROCEDURES: If swallowed, if conscious, give large amounts of water. Induce vomiting. If inhaled, remove to fresh air. If not breathing, give artificial respiration. If breathing is difficult, give oxygen. In case of contact, immediately flush eyes with plenty of water for at least 15 minutes. Flush skin with water.

Consult MSDS for further health and safety information. CAS NO. [50-00-0]

What it's used for: Formaldehyde is widely produced around the world for use as a disinfectant and preservative. It is also used in textile finishing and in the production of resins that act as adhesives and binders for wood products (plywood and chipboard), pulp, paper, glasswool and rockwool, as well as some plastics, coatings, paints and varnishes, and industrial chemicals.

Where it's found: Pressed wood products such as particle board, plywood, paneling and fiberboard, glues and adhesives, durable press fabrics like drapes, furniture, cabinets and building materials made from particleboard, medium density fibreboard and certain moulded plastics. Products containing formaldehyde also "off-gas" which means the formaldehyde will evaporate into the air slowly at a low rate. Products that pose this risk including some latex paints, wallpapers, cardboard and paper products, dishwashing liquids, fabric softeners, shoe-care agents, carpet cleaners, lacquers and some cosmetics, such as nail polish and nail hardener.

Health Effects Summary: Scientific research has shown that very high levels of exposure to formaldehyde cause cancer of the nasal cavity in lab animals and in workers exposed through their jobs. The levels of formaldehyde in Canadian homes are well below levels of concern for cancer. Exposure to moderate levels of formaldehyde can

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cause a number of irritant symptoms, including temporary burning of the eyes or nose, and a sore throat.

How we are exposed: Formaldehyde enters the environment through natural sources such as forest fires and certain human activities such as smoking tobacco, burning automotive and other fuels, and wood burning. Sources of formaldehyde in indoor air include tobacco smoke and smoke that may leak from wood-burning appliances, such as wood stoves and fireplaces. Many processed and finished products found inside our homes contain and release very small amounts of formaldehyde into the air.

What you can do to reduce exposure: Buying furniture that is free from formaldehyde eliminates much of the exposure we face from the chemical. One option to reduce this "off-gassing" is to purchase "exterior grade" pressed-wood products which emit formaldehyde at significantly lower rates. If you suspect you have wood products containing formaldehyde, increase ventilation, reduce humidity with air conditioners or dehumidifiers and keep your home cool. Plywood and plasterboard can be covered with plastic laminate to seal the unfinished sides which "off-gas" the most formaldehyde. Other strategies to reduce formaldehyde exposure and risk in your home include:

- Wash permanent press items before use
- Use consumer products in well-ventilated areas
- Don't use unvented heaters
- Don't allow smoking indoors. Note: Smoking in a garage or other closed area attached to the home still carries risks.