



Agency for Toxic Substances & Disease Registry

Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs)

CAS ID #: 1336-36-3, 11097-69-1

Affected Organ Systems: Dermal (Skin), Developmental (effects during periods when organs are developing), Endocrine (Glands and Hormones), Hepatic (Liver), Immunological (Immune System), Neurological (Nervous System)

Cancer Classification: NTP: Reasonably Anticipated to be a Human Carcinogen

Chemical Classification: Dioxins, Furans, PCBs (contain phenyl rings of carbon atoms), Pesticides (chemicals used for killing pests, such as rodents, insects, or plants)

Summary: Polychlorinated biphenyls are mixtures of up to 209 individual chlorinated compounds (known as congeners). There are no known natural sources of PCBs. PCBs are either oily liquids or solids that are colorless to light yellow. Some PCBs can exist as a vapor in air. PCBs have no known smell or taste. Many commercial PCB mixtures are known in the U.S. by the trade name Aroclor. PCBs have been used as coolants and lubricants in transformers, capacitors, and other electrical equipment because they don't burn easily and are good insulators. The manufacture of PCBs was stopped in the U.S. in 1977 because of evidence they build up in the environment and can cause harmful health effects. Products made before 1977 that may contain PCBs include old fluorescent lighting fixtures and electrical devices containing PCB capacitors, and old microscope and hydraulic oils.

Community Members



[ToxFAQs](/toxfaq/tf.asp?id=140&tid=26) (/toxfaq/tf.asp?id=140&tid=26)

Fact sheet that answers the most frequently asked questions about a contaminant and its health effects.

[Public Health Statement](/phs/phs.asp?id=139&tid=26) (/phs/phs.asp?id=139&tid=26)

Summary about a hazardous substance taken from Chapter One of its respective ATSDR Toxicological Profile.

[National Report on Human Exposure to Environmental Chemicals](http://www.cdc.gov/exposurereport/) (<http://www.cdc.gov/exposurereport/>)

Provides an ongoing assessment of the exposure of the U.S. population to environmental chemicals using biomonitoring.

Toxicological and Health Professionals



Page last reviewed
March 3, 2011
Toxicological Profile (</toxprofiles/tp.asp?id=142&tid=26>)

Succinctly characterizes the toxicologic and adverse health effects information for a hazardous substance.

- Page last updated:

March 3, 2011

Addendum to the Profile (PDF, 1325KB*) (http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxprofiles/pcbs_addendum.pdf)

Addendum to the Toxicological Profile for Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs) (April 2011)

for Agency
and Disease Registry

Priority List of Hazardous Substances (</spl/>)

Prioritization of substances based on a combination of their frequency, toxicity, and potential for human exposure at National Priorities List (NPL) sites.

Minimal Risk Levels (MRL) (</mrls/mrllist.asp#26tag>)

The MRL is an estimate of the daily human exposure to a hazardous substance that is likely to be without appreciable risk of adverse, non-cancer health effects over a specified duration of exposure. The information in this MRL serves as a screening tool to help public health professionals decide where to look more closely to evaluate possible risk of adverse health effects from human exposure.

Interaction Profiles (</interactionprofiles/index.asp>)

Succinctly characterizes the toxicologic and adverse health effects information for mixtures of hazardous substances.

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