

Slaying the Flame Retardant Beast

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We get lots of questions on the choices we can make as individuals to lower the toxins in our own home. One big choice, previously not even an option, is now possible—buying upholstered furniture that is free of toxic flame retardants.

Until recently flame retardants were routinely added to upholstered furniture like sofas and upholstered chairs in order to help them meet tough anti-flammability standards, despite the fact that there actually wasn't clear proof that the chemicals worked and even though they are linked to cancer, learning problems, lowered IQ, and physical and mental developmental problems.



But now, thanks to California and its role leading the nation in tackling environmental issues, we have choices. First, California updated its previously nonsensical (addressing open flame rather than the more common smoldering ignition) flammability law in 2014, which effectively meant that manufacturers could meet the requirements without using flame retardants. A short time later the state also changed the labeling law. As of January, 1, 2015, all upholstered furniture is labeled whether it contains fire retardants.

The new laws don't ban flame retardants, but many manufacturers have stated the goal of either completely or partially eliminating them. WWYW is thrilled with how many companies have worked quickly and decisively over the last year and a half to bring healthier products to the market. Other furniture makers have been less clear, and furniture that does contain the toxic chemicals is definitely still on the market.

Remember to ask questions, and if you're looking at the furniture piece in person, flip over the cushion or look on the bottom of the frame for the label. Furniture manufactured after Jan 1 2015 will clearly be marked with a check whether it's upholstery materials either "contain added flame retardant chemicals" or "contain NO added flame retardant chemicals."

Wondering about the furniture you already own? Check out [this](#) blog post from the National Resource Defense Council for information on what the previous labels placed on older upholstered furniture pieces reveal.

