

WHAT'S IN JEWELLERY

Toxic Substances in Kids' and Adults' Jewelry

The Problem:

Children's jewelry is known to contain toxic substances including heavy metals like lead and cadmium, as well as PVC and other plastics.



All jewelry carries a risk of contaminants unless you know 100 percent of the composition for every single part of the piece.

Why Toxic Jewelry Matters to People & Planet

- Some jewelry components are linked to negative health impacts. This is exacerbated by the fact that kids commonly put jewelry in their mouths.
- Fast-fashion plastic jewelry and disposable metal items contribute to pollution. Metal and gem mining can contribute to environmental degradation and human rights violations.



The Top Offenders:

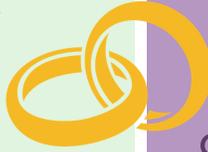
- ☠ Lead:
neurotoxin linked to developmental issues
- ☠ Cadmium:
associated with cancer, developmental toxicity, and organ damage
- ☠ Nickel:
allergen and sensitizer
- ☠ PVC & Other Plastics:
linked to endocrine disruption and contribute to pollution

Additional Substances of Concern in Jewelry:

- ☠ Antimony:
associated with cancer
- ☠ Arsenic:
linked to cancer, cardiovascular disease, and developmental toxicity
- ☠ Brominated Flame Retardants:
may be linked to various health impacts including reproductive toxicity, cancer, and more

Where Toxic Jewelry May Be Found

- Costume jewelry
- Retailers across price points (dollar stores to high-end department stores)
- Jewelry craft kits
- Inexpensive jewelry retailers
- Wearables with batteries (from sport watches to light-up jewelry)



Environmental Degradation + Human Rights Issues

Choosing pure gold and silver is a solution to avoid exposure to toxic substances; however, it can introduce a set of environmental and human rights issues. Upcycled and vintage gold and silver is best for the environment; select them only when they are pure metals. Vintage and upcycled jewelry also avoid contributing to any issues regarding the health and safety of workers in the supply chain.

Safer Jewelry Materials

- 100 percent gold and sterling silver are nontoxic options
- Vermeil (a specific type of plating using gold and silver metals only)
- Non-metal materials like thread, macramé, and fabric
- Surgical implant grade stainless steel (note that this is not the same as less-regulated “surgical grade”)



Safe Jewelry Tips

- Shop for jewelry and jewelry kits that contain the safer materials listed above.
- Wash your hands immediately after using craft kits. And make sure no pieces are left behind to avoid a child placing them in their mouth.
- Be careful with antique or heirloom jewelry (even if it's not valuable) and keep it out of children's hands.
- Watches and wearables with batteries should not be given to small children, even to play with. Batteries can be deadly if swallowed and small parts are also choking hazards.
- Skip plated jewelry, as there are no rules or disclosures for what metals can be used, unless it's labeled as "vermeil" which only uses gold over silver.
- Consider quality over quantity. For some children, one gold or sterling silver piece may be worth investing in over multiple inexpensive pieces made of low-quality materials.
- For younger children who are not yet ready for special jewelry or for more affordable options, consider materials like thread, macramé, and fabric over plastic and metal.



For more information on jewelry, as well as current labeling standards and scientific sources, visit: <https://www.madesafe.org/education/whats-in-that/jewelry/>