



**ECOLOGYCENTER**  
Healthy People, Healthy Planet

# Be Well... And Don't Mind the Toxics

Thursday, May 7, 2015 Patrick Beger

Last year, demonstrations took place at a variety of Walgreens stores across the country as part of a national day of action, calling on the nation's largest pharmacy chain to remove toxic products from their shelves. Ecology Center staff and volunteers organized outside of the Walgreens on State St., in Ann Arbor, in protest of the hazardous chemicals found in numerous, everyday items on Walgreens shelves, ranging from household cleaning products, school supplies, pet toys, and other everyday consumer products.

**More toxic products were found at Walgreens this year**, eliciting another day of action by Ecology Center staff and volunteers. This included handing-off over 130,000 petition signatures to the Walgreens on State St., in Ann Arbor, as well as demonstrating with a few "gigantic" petitions, to symbolize consumer demand for safer products.

Unfortunately, this year testing by the Ecology Center found more hazardous products on Walgreens shelves, including dangerous phthalates in some small purses, a power cable, and a pair of vinyl gloves, among the few things that were tested. This came as a big disappointment after Walgreens announced last year that a "Chemical Sustainability Initiative," was being developed in response to last year's Mind the Store Campaign, which included a delivery of around 135,000 petitions delivered to Walgreens headquarters.

"Some of these products contain chemicals that have long been linked to serious health issues including cancer, developmental disabilities and reproductive harm," said Rebecca Meuninck, environmental health campaign director at the Ecology Center. "That is why

pregnant women and children are especially at risk, so for a store that serves a variety of customers including families, implementing a strong chemical policy should be a no-brainer for Walgreens.”

Last year’s report conducted by the Ecology Center and HealthyStuff.org tested 44 products from Walgreens shelves, finding dangerous chemicals including PVC (vinyl) plastic, phthalates, organotins and heavy metals that have been identified as toxic by state and federal agencies, and have been linked to asthma, birth defects, learning disabilities, reproductive problems, liver toxicity, and cancer.

“As the nation’s largest pharmacy chain, Walgreens is in the business of health and wellness,” said Jeff Gearhart, research director for the Ecology Center and HealthyStuff.org. “They should ensure the products they sell don’t contain chemicals that may be harmful to children and pregnant women. Walgreens has an opportunity to join other big retailers in transitioning to safer chemicals and products that are healthier for our families.”

It seems that someone has to remind Walgreens that safety comes first, and who better to do that than 130,000 people who shop at their stores? It is time that Walgreens follows in the footsteps of other corporate leaders like Walmart and Target who already have adopted strong chemical policies of their own. We and other customers have no time to wait.

[Check out which products we’ve tested](#) from Walgreens.

Find out more at from our friends at Mind the Store about [developing a chemical policy at Walgreens](#)

[Donate to the Ecology Center](#) to help us continue putting the pressure on companies like Walgreens who are putting our health in jeopardy! Thank you.

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