

How well can you sleep if your bed is made with toxic chemicals?

Do you feel safe in your own home? Sadly, you might think twice before getting too comfortable. In the last 100 years, our homes – which should be a place of refuge – have become a place where Americans are very likely to be exposed to toxins. The place we sleep, eat, live, and raise our babies and kids has become a hotbed for toxic chemicals with known links to some of our most heartbreaking diseases – cancer, birth defects, brain damage, asthma, allergies, and neurological diseases to name a few.¹

In the modern home, we are exposed at every turn – from VOC off-gassing paint, PVC laden carpets, fire retardant furniture, toxic cleaning supplies and, most concerning, the place we lay our heads for eight hours a night – our beds and pillows. Protecting ourselves from this onslaught is concerning enough. Protecting our babies and children is even harder as their tiny, still developing bodies are far more vulnerable than a grown adult's.² What can a concerned individual – especially a parent or grandparent – do?

contamination, Barry knows a few things about chemicals. So when his wife sent him to the store to buy a crib mattress for their first grandchild, he was shocked to find that the only options in the store (and elsewhere on the market) were made with controversial flame retardants, plasticizers, isocyanates, perfluorinated compounds, anti-microbial pesticides, and various other chemicals that have been associated with brain damage, impede breathing, reduce male sperm count and/or other toxicity issues.

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Because of the ongoing exposure of these issues by various individuals and groups within the environmental community, including constituent groups of the American Sustainable Business Council, some of these chemicals have since been banned by Congress or withdrawn from the market.

Naturepedic Helping Kids Sleep Safe, and Grow Up Healthy

As a grandfather, Barry Cik was faced with just this question. A Board Certified Environmental Engineer with over a quarter century of experience in analyzing chemicals and chemical

While trying to find a suitable crib mattress, Barry realized that the current state of chemical disclosures was a travesty. In Barry’s words, “When I was in engineering school back in the late 60’s and 70’s, I watched Lake Erie start to die. I realized then that it’s not possible to keep dumping chemicals into the lake and pretend that the chemicals will forever simply vanish. The day of reckoning will eventually come. It was true for Lake Erie, and it’s true for babies and children. The available baby crib mattress options, with all their chemicals, were not acceptable for my grandchild. My grandfather slept on straw, and, if necessary, my grandchild would sleep on straw, because what

1. The Safer Chemicals, Healthy Families Coalition provides a list of Chemicals of Concern, many of which appear in household products, and associated health risks at: <http://www.saferchemicals.org/resources/chemicals/>

2. Population Reference Bureau, “Children’s Environmental Health: Risks & Remedies,” <http://www.prb.org/Publications/PolicyBriefs/ChildrensEnvironmentalHealthRisksandRemedies.aspx>

I saw in the store was not progress.”

Barry found that there were organic mattresses on the market. However, although a much healthier option without synthetic toxins, the organic mattresses were not waterproof, making them bacteria and mold inducing and therefore impractical for accident-prone babies. Further, they were mostly natural rubber latex based, a known allergenic material, certainly for children. Confronted with the realization that not a single mattress on the market was appropriate enough for his grandchild, Barry decided to make his own crib mattress, and a new business, Naturepedic, was born.



The premise behind Naturepedic is simple. Naturepedic develops its products based on the knowledge that babies and children are simply unable to absorb continuous exposures of chemicals and allergens into their fragile bodies.

Creating a Successful Market

The business opportunity proved to be huge. According to Barry, expecting moms are very educated consumers – they frequently walk into retail stores and say simply, “Please, no toxic chemicals for my baby.” Not surprisingly, Naturepedic’s products have essentially been selling themselves since day one. About half of the retailers that carry Naturepedic products do so because their customers asked them to. As a result, Naturepedic’s growth – with very limited advertising – has been “phenomenal” to the point

that the company can barely keep up. Today the Ohio based company – which truly got off the ground just a few years ago with only Barry and his two sons – now has 40 employees, and its products are in hundreds of stores nationwide.

When Naturepedic produces a mattress, the company ensures it meets all safety standards, such as proper firmness and fit, and provides fire protection and waterproofing. But more importantly, Naturepedic uses safer and healthier materials, components and ingredients. In particular, Naturepedic optimizes the use of natural and organic materials, and all its mattresses (the entire mattress, not merely some individual components) meet the requirements of the Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS) as well as the requirements of the most stringent GREENGUARD “Select” Standard in addition to the GREENGUARD “Children & Schools” Standard.

Naturepedic’s products have broad appeal because, in Barry’s words, people are “waking up” – they realize that most products on store shelves cannot be guaranteed to be safe, and they are proactively seeking out healthier options. Naturepedic is committed to eliminating all questionable chemicals and allergens that have been introduced into baby and children’s mattresses. A favorite comment by Barry is “I’m not here to give you the ‘next best thing’. To the contrary, I’m here to take away some of those so-called ‘next best things’ that you don’t want in your baby’s crib mattress.”

Harmful chemicals and known allergenic materials are not permitted in the company’s plant or its crib mattresses or other products. According to Barry, “Years ago, the most prevalent attitude was that if a product was on the shelf, it was presumed to be safe because if it wasn’t safe, the government wouldn’t allow it to be sold. Today, people are realizing that this simply is not the case.”

Toxic Nation

America's Current State of Play

While companies like Naturepedic soldier on to provide healthier crib and other mattresses, they are doing so as pioneers in a toxic, un-regulated landscape. Many people may be surprised to know that current U.S. laws do not protect consumers from toxic chemicals. Each of us carries in our bodies as many as 200 industrial chemicals, all invented in the past 75 years.

Only a small fraction of these and the other 80,000 plus chemicals on the U.S. market have ever been screened for a single possible health effect such as cancer. This is because 62,000 chemicals, constituting 76 percent of chemicals registered for use in the U.S., were “grandfathered” under the 1976 Toxics Substances Control Act (TSCA), which means that chemical manufacturers are not required to disclose information on their toxicity. And for the close to 20,000 chemicals that remain, the law requires EPA – not the companies that produce the chemicals – to demonstrate they are harmful before they can be regulated. This 35-year old law, which never had teeth in the first place, is still the only federal legislation that “regulates” toxic substances in the U.S. today.

“Consumers should have the power to choose. In order to choose, they must know what’s in the products they buy. It’s that simple.” ~Ally LaTourelle, BioAmber

Under this current state of play, it’s next to impossible for retailers or manufacturers of final products like crib mattresses, let alone consumers, to know what’s safe and what’s not. And these chemicals don’t just show up in our products at home. As a result of the manufacturing process, chemicals leak into our surrounding environment, and workers across the supply chain are exposed at high levels. Meanwhile, the cost of healthcare for addressing the diseases linked to many of these

chemicals continues to skyrocket.

Seventh Generation is another pioneering company that stepped into this void with their non-toxic cleaning and other home supplies. As Seventh Generation’s founder, Jeffrey Hollender, notes, “We are allowing companies to make us sick, and then paying a premium to the health care industry to try and make us better. That paradigm is not economically viable or sustainable.”

Shifting the Burden of Proof

The Need for Regulation

On a hopeful note, U.S. Senator Frank Lautenberg and other legislators, including Senators Barbara Boxer, Amy Klobuchar, Charles Schumer and others, are now fighting for change through the proposed Safe Chemicals Act (S.847), which would require companies to prove that the chemicals they manufacture are safe, and would allow EPA to require any additional information it needs to make a safety determination. In Lautenberg’s words, “It’s obvious that the system doesn’t work. We can’t allow this assault on our children’s health – and our own health – to continue.” Unfortunately, Congress has not made traction on passing the Safe Chemicals Act, which was originally introduced in April, 2010 and which Lautenberg has re-introduced. Organizations such as the American Sustainable Business Council and the Safer Chemicals, Healthy Families coalition, which include hundreds of organizations such as the American Nurses Association, Health Care Without Harm, and the Breast Cancer Fund, are calling on Congress to follow Lautenberg’s lead and expedite the bill’s passage. “Right now, a company manufactures a chemical and puts it out on the market and reaps the economic reward,” said Dr. Jerome Paulson, lead author of the American Academy of Pediatrics policy statement on regulating toxic chemicals in consumer products. “And then the public is responsible for trying to figure out if there is any harm associated with the

use of that chemical. And then it's almost a criminal procedure, requiring proof beyond a reasonable doubt."

The reasoning is straightforward - not only will the bill support the health of all Americans, it will also benefit business and the U.S. economy in several key ways. These include:

Providing better risk management: To avoid selling potentially harmful products, manufacturers must currently invest a lot of capital to find out for themselves whether the chemicals they are using in their products are safe. And retailers have learned the hard way that they must serve as their own mini regulators. As Richard Liroff, director of the Investor Environmental Health Network points out, when Health Canada (Canada's overseer of food, drug, and product safety) and the U.S. National Toxicology Program both raised concerns about the health risks of BPA in 2008, the announcements "effectively shut down the market for polycarbonate baby bottles in the U.S."³ As a result of such damaging "surprises," major retailers like Wal-Mart have started banning whole classes of products from their shelves, leaving the manufacturers of these products with a decimated market. Consistent federal policy would help manufacturers and retailers alike manage their risk and avoid these damaging shocks to their bottom lines.

Increasing consumer confidence: In the words of Ally LaTourelle, V.P. Government Affairs at the green chemical company BioAmber, "Consumers should have the power to choose. In order to choose, they must know what's in the products they buy. It's that simple." But because information on chemical safety is not readily available, more and more consumers are becoming wary of buying chemically laden products, which is problematic for many manufacturers. Credible federal regulation is needed to restore consumer confidence.

Expanding markets for chemical manufacturers: Many manufacturers like Naturepedic and Seventh Generation apply the precautionary principle and avoid the use of chemicals with insufficient safety information. Transparency by chemical manufacturers regarding the safety of their chemicals would help consumer product manufacturers reach these rapidly growing, more safety conscious markets.

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Providing incentives for innovation and job creation: Limiting or banning the use of chemicals that prove unsafe would create incentives for producing new, alternative options. This would also provide companies like Naturepedic with more viable inputs for their baby crib mattresses and mattress accessories, ultimately driving costs down for consumers at the end of the supply chain.

Increasing U.S. competitiveness globally: Unlike the U.S., other industrialized countries have caught on to the dangers of toxic chemicals and have taken effective regulatory action. The formaldehyde soaked FEMA trailers that sickened Hurricane Katrina victims is a tragic example of how far the U.S. lags behind. The cheaper, high formaldehyde plywood used in those trailers was imported from China, which makes a low formaldehyde version for use in Europe, Japan, and even China because those markets have more stringent regulatory restrictions. U.S. companies producing for the less restrictive U.S. market not only risk sickening their customers, they risk excluding themselves from global markets that will not accept their products. Bringing the U.S. regulatory framework in line with those of other industrialized countries will not only provide more predictability for U.S. companies, it will also improve the global reputation of U.S. products.

3. "Rich Liroff on BPA: Better safe than sorry," January 29, 2010, <http://www.marcgunther.com/2010/01/29/rich-liroff-on-bpa-better-safe-than-sorry/>

Towards a Sustainable Future

Companies like Naturepedic are doing a great service for American consumers, but they can't do it alone. Taking Naturepedic's concept to scale and ensuring every baby in the U.S. has a healthy night's sleep requires U.S. regulatory action. According to David Levine, Executive Director of the American Sustainable Business Council, "The companies that develop the products we use every day have been operating in the dark for far too long; not knowing what risks they might be passing on to their customers and what damage they might ultimately incur to their bottom line as a result. The time for consistent federal regulation that protects consumer health – and the business health of consumer product manufacturers – is long overdue."

With lawmakers like Senator Lautenberg leading the way, there is finally hope for a rational regulatory framework and for the day when expecting moms no longer have to say, "Please, no toxic chemicals for my baby," and hunt for products that fit the bill. Tonight, many parents will rest easy thanks to Naturepedic's dedication to providing a healthy mattress choice for their children. Working together, we can take Naturepedic's vision to the next level and create the economy of tomorrow – an economy where safer chemicals can be used to create safer products, spurring innovation and creating new jobs and business opportunities, and where all parents can rest assured that the only choice for their kids is a healthy one.

Special thanks to Patti Pierson for her help.

economy. The Council brings together the business perspective, experience and political will and strength to stimulate our economy, benefit our communities, and preserve our environment. ASBC works on a wide range of policy issues at the federal and state level.

Today, the organizations that have joined in this partnership represent over 100,000 businesses and more than 200,000 entrepreneurs, owners, executives, investors and business professionals. These diverse business organizations cover the gamut of local and state chambers of commerce, microenterprise, social enterprise, green and sustainable business groups, local living economy groups, women business leaders, economic development organizations and investor and business incubators. www.asbcouncil.org

For more information about Naturepedic, visit www.naturepedic.com. To learn about the advocacy work of the American Sustainable Business Council, visit www.asbcouncil.org

What is the American Sustainable Business Council?

The American Sustainable Business Council (ASBC) is a growing coalition of business organizations and businesses committed to advancing a new vision, framework and policies that support a vibrant, equitable and sustainable