

Low levels of formaldehyde in clothing unlikely to pose health risk

September 8 2010

The formaldehyde added to fabrics to keep clothing looking fresh and wrinkle-free is unlikely to pose a health risk to consumers, according to an article in the current issue of Chemical & Engineering News (C&EN), ACS' weekly newsmagazine.

C&EN Senior Correspondent David J. Hanson notes that manufacturers have added [formaldehyde](#) to fabrics for almost a hundred years to make fabrics easier to care for, particularly to reduce wrinkling in cotton and prevent stains. But concern has emerged over formaldehyde's potential for causing allergic reactions such as skin rashes in some people. Formaldehyde also is a potential human carcinogen.

The article describes a new analysis of formaldehyde levels in [clothing](#) and the potential health risks. The analysis found that formaldehyde levels in clothing have fallen significantly over the past 25 years. In 1984, for instance, 67 percent of fabrics tested in government studies had levels greater than 100 parts per million, a level the textile industry considers high. But since 2003, less than two percent of items tested showed such high levels and most clothing items had nondetectable levels, the article says, noting that the health risk from formaldehyde is likely very small.

More information: "Formaldehyde in Clothing". This story is available at pubs.acs.org/cen/government/88/8836gov2.html

Provided by American Chemical Society

Citation: Low levels of formaldehyde in clothing unlikely to pose health risk (2010, September 8) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2010-09-formaldehyde-pose-health.html>

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