



The Learning Disabilities Association is a non-profit organization made up of teachers, professionals and families and individuals with learning and attention disabilities. We are also affiliates of the Learning Disabilities Association of America (LDA).

While there are several factors—genetics, social environment, nutrition--that lie behind the large numbers of children with these learning and developmental disabilities, the National Academy of Sciences reports that over a quarter (28%)<sup>\*</sup> of learning disabilities cases are caused in part by exposure to toxic chemicals.<sup>i</sup> This means that 360,000 U.S. children (1 in every 200 U.S. children) suffer from developmental or neurological deficits caused by exposure to known toxic substances<sup>ii</sup>.

The Learning Disabilities Association is dedicated to reducing the effects of environmental contaminants on brain development, especially in children. A growing body of research indicates that many learning and behavior problems are linked to toxic chemicals which are widespread in the environment and products, and to which we are exposed on a daily basis.

### **Learning and Other Developmental Disabilities are Increasing**

- 1 in 6 children under the age of 18 have a developmental disability, ranging from mild disabilities such as speech and language impairments to serious developmental disabilities, such as intellectual disabilities, cerebral palsy, and autism<sup>iii</sup>;
- 1 in 68 children in the U.S. have an autism spectrum disorder<sup>iv</sup>;
- 7% of children in the U.S. have a learning disability<sup>v</sup>;
- Nationally, 11% of children 4-17 years of age (6.4 million) have been diagnosed with ADHD<sup>vi</sup>; and
- According to the CDC, these disabilities are rising at an alarming rate: learning disabilities have risen by about 5%, developmental disabilities by about 17%, ADHD by 33%, and autism by about 290% (1997 to 2008)<sup>vii</sup>.

## Children More At Risk From Toxic Chemicals

Children are not "little adults" - their developing brains and bodies, their metabolism and behaviors make them uniquely vulnerable to harm from toxic chemicals.

- Exposure begins in the womb through mother's exposure to toxic chemicals.
- Children put things in their mouths and spend a lot of time on the floor and ground, so they may ingest chemicals from products and even household dust on a regular basis.
- For their weight, children eat, drink and breathe more than adults - so pound for pound they take in a greater quantity of toxic contaminants. A small exposure can translate into a big dose.
- Rapid brain development in the fetus, infant and young child make children more susceptible to harm from chemicals that may impair brain function and development.

### How are our children exposed?

Children today are exposed to thousands of newly developed synthetic chemicals.

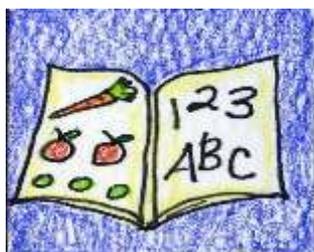
- Approximately 80,000 chemicals are used in commerce today—about 2,000 more are newly released every year.
- **Fewer than 10% are tested at all for their impact on human health; only 12 of those 80,000 chemicals have been fully tested for their affect on children's neurological development.**
- More studies emerge each year pointing to connections between exposure to toxic chemicals and damage to the immune, neurological, or reproductive systems of developing fetuses and young children.
- Despite current regulations (often too little, too late), these toxic substances are still in products and the environment where they continue to damage the health of our children.

## Please Join Us

LDA urges major retailers to tell suppliers to stop using toxic chemicals in the products their consumers buy and use every day. Retailers can help reduce the use of toxic chemicals in products and protect children's health and development.

### To learn more, please contact

Maureen Swanson  
Learning Disabilities Association of America's  
Healthy Children's Project Director  
[www.healthychildrenproject.org](http://www.healthychildrenproject.org)  
1-888-300-6710, x 208



*\* The National Academy of Sciences estimates that toxic exposures are directly related to 3% of the incidences and play a part in at least another 25% of cases of these disabilities.*

---

<sup>i</sup> National Academy of Sciences Committee on Developmental Toxicology, 2000:  
[http://www.nap.edu/openbook.php?record\\_id=9871&page=R1](http://www.nap.edu/openbook.php?record_id=9871&page=R1)

<sup>ii</sup> "Polluting Our Future: Chemical Pollution in the U.S. that Affects Child Development and Learning", National Environmental Trust, Physicians for Social Responsibility, and Learning Disabilities Association of America, September 2000.  
<http://www.bvsde.paho.org/bvsana/i/fulltext/chemical/chemical.pdf>

<sup>iii</sup> Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): <http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/data.html>

<sup>iv</sup> CDC: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/data.html>

<sup>v</sup> CDC: [http://www.cdc.gov/features/dsdev\\_disabilities/](http://www.cdc.gov/features/dsdev_disabilities/)

<sup>vi</sup> CDC: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/adhd/data.html>

<sup>vii</sup> CDC: [http://www.cdc.gov/features/dsdev\\_disabilities/](http://www.cdc.gov/features/dsdev_disabilities/)