



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Safe Shopping Guide for Back-to-School Supplies

**Lab results show many supplies safe,
but some contain asbestos, lead and other hazardous chemicals**

Many parents and teachers shopping for students' 2018-19 school supplies look for a "non-toxic" label on the products, but many products don't have that label. NYPIRG in partnership with the U.S. PIRG Education Fund is releasing a guide that advises consumers which products are actually non-toxic and which to avoid.

"This fall, parents and teachers can use our safe shopping guide to help them purchase school supplies," said Russ Haven, NYPIRG General Counsel. "We should feel safe knowing we're sending kids off to school with supplies that don't contain toxic chemicals."

The U.S. PIRG Education Fund tested dozens of school supplies, including markers, crayons, dry erase markers, glue, 3-ring binders, spiral notebooks, lunchboxes and water bottles. Laboratory tests found several supplies containing asbestos, lead, benzene and other dangerous chemicals. The "School Supplies Safe Shopping Guide" warns consumers about those specific products, and offers suggestions for safer alternatives.

Out of the dozens of products that were tested, most did not contain toxic chemicals. However, the tests and investigation found the following:

- Asbestos in Playskool crayons sold at Dollar Tree. Asbestos, which can cause lung cancer and mesothelioma, has recently been found in other children's products, such as makeup.
- Lead in recently-recalled children's water bottles (Base Brands children's Reduce Hydro Pro Furry Friends water bottle, once sold by Costco, and GSI Outdoors children's water bottle, once sold by L.L. Bean). The Consumer Product Safety Commission recalled both of these items because they contained high levels of lead. Lead can cause severe developmental and behavioral problems.
- Phthalates in Jot brand blue 3-ring binder. The levels of phthalates in the binder is considered unsafe for children by the Consumer Product Safety Commission. High levels of phthalates can lead to birth defects, hyperactivity, and reproductive problems.
- Benzene in Board Dudes brand markers. Benzene is a known carcinogen linked to leukemia, and disruptions in sexual reproduction and live, kidney and immune system function.

“Based on our testing, we know that most manufacturers make safe school supplies. We’re calling on the makers of unsafe products to get rid of toxic chemicals and protect American schoolchildren,” Haven said.

The full report and safe shopping guide can be found at [www.nypirg.org/pubs/201808/NYPIRG Toxics in Back to School Supplies FINAL 2018.pdf](http://www.nypirg.org/pubs/201808/NYPIRG_Toxics_in_Back_to_School_Supplies_FINAL_2018.pdf).

“The safest schools are healthy schools,” said Coalition for Healthier Schools Coordinator and Healthy Schools Network Founder and Executive Director Claire Barnett. “As children across the country get ready to return for the new semester, the national Coalition is urging parents to join us in this fight.” The Healthy Schools Network released a “tool kit” for parents, other caregivers and teachers to help them understand school health issues as part of *National Back to School Day*. Access the tool kit here: <http://www.healthyschools.org/coalitionactionkit.html>.

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NYPIRG is a not-for-profit, non-partisan organization that works to protect consumers, public health and the environment. Through research, public education and outreach, NYPIRG fights to advance and protect the public’s well-being.

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