



# Eco-Healthy Child Care



Eco-Healthy Child Care ensures early childhood learning environments are as healthy, safe and green as possible by reducing children's exposure to toxic chemicals.

## Treated Playground Equipment

### Health Concerns

The wood in many playground sets, picnic tables, benches and decks can contain potentially hazardous levels of arsenic due to the use of Chromated Copper Arsenate (CCA) as a wood preservative and insecticide. Arsenic is a toxic chemical element that occurs naturally in rock and soil. Arsenic is colorless, tasteless and odorless. When the chemical enters the body through ingestion or inhalation, it is readily absorbed and undetectable. Exposure to CCA treated wood may increase a person's risk of developing a chronic disease, such as cancer.

### Pressure Treated Wood

Chromated Copper Arsenate is made up of 22% arsenic, a known carcinogen. In 2004, CCA was phased-out for residential uses; however, exposure to structures (decks, playground sets, picnic tables) built prior to 2004 are still a health concern, particularly for children.

### Children's Exposure to CCA

Children constantly put their hands in their mouths. If children play on arsenic treated wood, they have a higher risk of exposure. Children's bodies do not break down arsenic easily, which means that arsenic stays in their bodies longer than it would in an adult's body. The health

effects related to arsenic include irritation of the stomach and intestines, birth or developmental effects, skin cancer, lung cancer, bladder cancer, infertility and miscarriages in women.

### What to Do to Avoid Arsenic Exposure

**Test it.** Test kits are available for a fee at [Environmental Working Group](#), [Home Building Network](#) and the [Safe Playgrounds Project](#).

**Seal it.** Apply a water-based sealant twice a year.

**Wash up.** Make sure children wash their hands with mild soap and water after playing outdoors. Do not allow children to put their hands in their mouths after handling CCA-treated wood.

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

**Call: 503-222-1963 x119**

**Email: [hesterp@oeconline.org](mailto:hesterp@oeconline.org)**

**Visit: [www.oeconline.org/ehcc](http://www.oeconline.org/ehcc)**

**Take cover.** Cover picnic tables with a plastic coated tablecloth; avoid contact of food and drink with CCA-treated wood.

**Do not burn it, sand it or cut it.** Burning CCA-treated wood will release arsenic into the air. Sanding or cutting CCA-treated wood will create toxic dust.

**Dispose of it at a hazardous waste site.**

Visit [www.earth911.org](http://www.earth911.org); enter your item and zip code and hazardous waste locations will be provided.

**Replace it.** Replace CCA-treated wood with [safer alternatives](#).

### Playground Equipment Resources

- Avoid Arsenic Exposure from CCA-treated Wood  
[www.checnet.org/healthhouse/education/top10-detail.asp?Top10\\_Cat\\_ID=25](http://www.checnet.org/healthhouse/education/top10-detail.asp?Top10_Cat_ID=25)
- Poisoned Playgrounds  
[www.ewg.org/reports/poisonedplaygrounds](http://www.ewg.org/reports/poisonedplaygrounds)
- Arsenic Home Test Kit  
[www.ewg.org/reports/poisonwoodrivals/orderform](http://www.ewg.org/reports/poisonwoodrivals/orderform)
- Arsenic Test Kit  
[www.healthybuilding.net/arsenic/index.html](http://www.healthybuilding.net/arsenic/index.html)
- Chromated Copper Arsenate (CCA)  
[www.epa.gov/oppad001/reregistration/cca](http://www.epa.gov/oppad001/reregistration/cca)
- Arsenic Wood: Hazards and Alternatives  
[www.healthybuilding.net/arsenic/hbn\\_wood\\_factsheet.html](http://www.healthybuilding.net/arsenic/hbn_wood_factsheet.html)
- The Safe Playgrounds Project  
[www.safe2play.org](http://www.safe2play.org)
- Beyond Pesticides  
[www.beyondpesticides.org/wood](http://www.beyondpesticides.org/wood)
- Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry  
[www.atsdr.cdc.gov/tfacts2.html](http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/tfacts2.html)

*A recipient of EPA's Children's Environmental Health Excellence Award in 2006, Eco-Healthy Child Care (EHCC) is a national program that seeks to improve the environmental health of children by partnering with child care professionals to eliminate or reduce environmental health hazards found in child care facilities. Originally created by the Oregon Environmental Council in 2005, EHCC is now managed by Children's Environmental Health Network.*