

What are PCBs?

Children edition



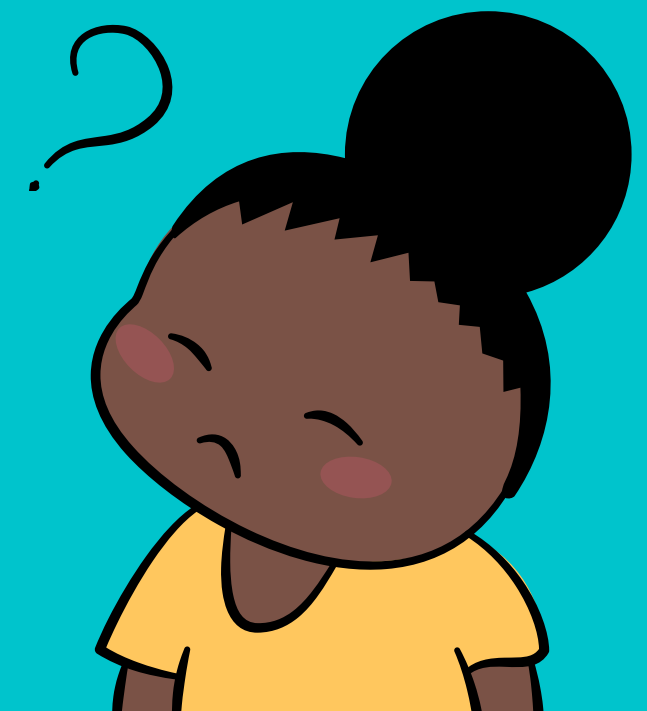
What are PCBs?

PCBs are a group of chemicals with the long name polychlorinated biphenyls. They are man-made chemicals, that means they were invented by humans. Because their properties are very useful they were manufactured in large quantities many years ago, before the 1980s.

PCBs were used in electrical equipment for power supply and in many other products for example old televisions and fridges. Because these chemicals are very stable and they have been used in so many products they entered the environment. Nowadays we know that PCBs are toxic for us and animals, therefore we must prevent further spread of PCBs to the environment to protect ourselves.

Why are PCBs dangerous in the environment?

Once PCBs are released into the environment, they can travel long distances and remain for a long time in the air, water and soil. PCBs attach to the fat of animals, and build up in living organisms over time. Top predators, for example, killer whales can have high PCB concentration because they eat many smaller animals, such as seals and fish, that could contribute to the PCB concentration of the killer whales.



How do PCBs get into my body?

We can get contaminated with PCBs mainly by eating meat (e.g. fish that had bioaccumulated PCBs overtime) and drinking PCB-contaminated water.



How can I avoid PCB?

- If you live near hazardous waste sites, do not play on the ground or in areas where electrical equipment has caught fire.
- Do not eat dirt and wash your hands carefully and frequently.
- Do not play with old electrical equipment.

