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## Voluntary recall of certain nursing pillows due to detection of harmful substances

Nursing pillows are used to help lactating mothers maintain stable feeding posture and reduce fatigue. As newborn babies use these products for long hours, harmful substances need to be strictly managed.



Nursing pillow

However, according to Korea Consumer Agency (President Lee Hee-sook), certain nursing pillows required improvements due to the detection of harmful substances when 16 products\* currently distributed and sold in the market were tested on their safety and labelling status.

\* D-shaped nursing pillow containing plastic foam and inner filling

### ☐ Lead above tolerance levels detected from 3 products

Nursing pillows are categorized as children's products subject to safety certification according to the 'Special Act on the Safety of Children's Products', and shall meet safety requirements on harmful substances under the "Safety standards on children's fiber products\*."

\* Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy Notification No. 2017-0016, Jan. 31, 2017

When tested on their content of harmful substances, three out of 16 (18.8%) of the tested nursing pillows failed and were found to contain lead from zipper pull, exceeding safety standards (not more than 300mg/kg) by 3.1 times maximum (Min. 351mg/kg to Max. 930mg/kg).

\* Businesses which manufactured and sold the concerned three products suspended sales, and replied that they will exchange or make refunds upon consumer's request.

**[ Test results on nursing pillows which exceeded lead tolerance level ]**

Product (Color or type, style No.)	Brand	Manufacturer /Seller	Detected part	Total lead (mg/kg)
				Tolerance level: 300 (Metal substance)
Organic D-type nursing pillow (Leaf)	Thinkeco	Willbes & Co., Ltd.	Zipper pull	930
Teenie Tings nursing pillow (Mint peach fleece)	Teenie Tings	DR Company Co., Ltd.		391
G8 nursing pillow (Blue)	Bebettirang	Kiwon Plus Co., Ltd.		351

- **Lead (Pb, lead)** : May slow down children's intelligence development, trigger loss of appetite, anemia, muscular weakening and others. Lead is categorized as "Possibly carcinogenic to humans" (Group 2B) by International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) of WHO.

□ **Harmful VOCs detected from 4 products**

Moreover, when tested on the emissions of harmful Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) in accordance with\*\* the "Safety standard on children's plastic products (floor mats)\*," three out of 16 tested nursing pillows (18.8%) were detected with 2-ethylhexoic acid from minimum 0.35mg/(m<sup>2</sup> · h) to maximum 0.65mg/(m<sup>2</sup> · h), and 1 product (6.3%) was detected with 0.13mg/(m<sup>2</sup> · h) of formaldehyde.

\* Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy Notification No. 2017-0016, Jan. 31, 2017

\*\* "Safety standard on children's plastic products (floor mats)" was applied, as no standards on harmful VoCs exist to apply to nursing pillows.

The results were higher than the applied tolerance levels (2-ethylhexoic acid: Not more than 0.25mg/(m<sup>2</sup> · h), formaldehyde: not more than 0.05mg/(m<sup>2</sup> · h)).

- \* Given that the concerned products are used by infants, businesses which manufactured and sold these four products stopped sales despite no existence of relevant standards, and replied that they will take preemptive measures such as exchange or refund upon consumer's request.

**[ Test results on nursing pillows detected with VOCs ]**

Product (Color or type, style No.)	Brand	Manufacturer /Seller	VOCs (mg/m <sup>2</sup> · h)		Note
			2-ethylhexoic acid	Formaldehyde	
			Not more than 0.25	Not more than 0.05	
Amigo Nursing Pillow (Blue)	Cozy Baby	Nuribebe	0.65	Undetected	-
Teenie Tings nursing pillow (Mint peach fleece)	Teenie Tings	DR Company Co., Ltd.	0.43	Undetected	-
Mombe Hug D-type nursing pillow (Baby blue)	Motheris	M&B Co., Ltd.	0.35	Undetected	-
Royalmond nursing pillow	Cubynmom	Cubynmom Co., Ltd.	Below standard	0.13	Limited to products produced in Apr. 2019

- ▣ **2-ethylhexoic acid** : Can be inhaled through steam or absorbed internally when in contact with the skin, and may stimulate mucous membrane inside the nose or throat.
- ▣ **Foamaldehyde** : May cause allergic contact dermatitis, chronic bronchitis, disorder of mucous membrane inside respiratory organs or eyes. Foamaldehyde is categorized as “Carcinogenic to humans” (Group 1) by IARC of WHO.

In particular, nursing pillows are products which infants use for long hours (average 5 hours a day, maximum 6-month-old). In some products, plastic foams which are highly likely to emit VOCs were used as internal material. Still, there is a need to review the scope of children’s products, as the current products subject to safety standards on VOCs is limited to children’s floor mats.



- \* Harmful chemical substances can react as solvents or catalysts when manufacturing plastic foams. Moreover, when process control is below standards, harmful chemical substances may reside in finished goods and be emitted in air when used.

#### ▣ **Seven products failed labelling standards**

Fiber products for infants, including nursing pillows, shall indicate the composition or mixture ratio of fiber, caution when handling, manufactured country, name of importer/manufacture, as well as KC mark to verify compliance to safety standards. These labels shall be back-stitched or fixed with equivalent effective means to prevent from falling off even when washed.

However, seven out of the tested 16 products (43.8%) omitted general information partially or entirely. Among those, five products (31.3%) required improvements due to the omission of KC mark.

Based on these results, the agency plans to request Korean Agency for Technology and Standards to 1) strengthen management and supervision of nursing pillows, and 2) review expanding the scope of the current children’s products subject to safety standards on VOCs.

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