

The following recycling code guide is reprinted from RAMP Info, the newsletter of Rochesterians Against the Misuse of Pesticides (Winter 2006, Volume 7, Number 1).

#### The Least Toxic Container Plastics



**(PETE) Polyethylene terephthalate**

is the simplest and most popular plastic in the world, a long chain of carbon atoms with two hydrogen atoms attached to each carbon atom. It is found in clear soft drink, juice, and water bottles, and some food containers.



**(HDPE) High-density polyethylene**

has a more complex chain of carbons. It is found in opaque plastic milk and water jugs, bleach, detergent, and shampoo bottles, and most plastic bags found in grocery produce.



**(LDPE) Low-density polyethylene**

with molecular weights attached to the carbon chain make it strong enough for bullet-proof vests. It's used in stronger plastic bags, most plastic wraps, and some bottles.



**(PP) Polypropylene**

is similar to polyethylene, except it's a vinyl polymer, and every other carbon in the chain has a methyl group attached to it. This makes polypropylene very resistant to high heat. It is used for clouded plastic products, such as some yogurt containers and baby bottles.

#### The Most Toxic Container Plastics



**(PVC) Polyvinyl chloride**

is produced by the monomer vinyl chloride, is a hard plastic made softer by the addition of plasticizers. The most widely used plasticizers are phthalates, which can leach from containers made of PVC, also used in shower curtains, car interiors, plumbing pipes, building materials, vinyl toys, and squeeze bottles.



**(PS) Polystyrene**

is a vinyl polymer with a long hydrocarbon chain with a phenyl group attached to every other carbon atom, known by its trade name Styrofoam, which is made into food trays, egg cartons, disposable cups, carry-out containers, and opaque plastic cutlery. Styrene can leach from polystyrene plastics.



**(Other) Polycarbonate**

is a thermoplastic made from bisphenol A (BPA) and phosgene, a gas used during World War I. It is used in most clear plastic baby bottles, sport plastic water bottles, metal food can liners, clear plastic sippy cups, and some clear plastic cutlery. BPA, which mimics estrogenic action, can leach from polycarbonate plastic.

<http://www.grassrootsinfo.org/plastics.html>