

ISDE resolution on PVC use in medical devices

The International Society of Doctors for the Environment ISDE, an international NGO representing over 30,000 medical doctors in 38 member organisations around the globe, is concerned that the chlorinated plastic polyvinyl chloride (PVC) represents a large amount of the plastic used in the health care industry.

When PVC is incinerated, as most medical waste is for hygienic reasons, highly toxic substances such as dioxins and furans are produced.

Dioxins and furans are among the 12 persistent organic pollutants (POP's) currently being considered for elimination within a legally binding global convention under the auspices of the United Nations Environment Programme UNEP.

Dioxins and furans released during the incineration of PVC medical devices are toxic to humans and animals. They are associated with immune system disorders and cancer. Their tendency to persist in the environment and to accumulate as they move up the food chain, has led to their being found in humans all over the world.

Furthermore, most PVC medical devices contain phthalates as softeners. Several phthalates are of health concern.

Therefore ISDE:

- 1) Urges all health care facilities to explore ways to reduce, with the aim to eliminate, their use of PVC plastics.
- 2) Calls upon health care professionals to encourage health care institutions with which they are associated to adopt policies that will reduce, with the aim to eliminate, the use of PVC plastics.
- 3) Strongly urges medical suppliers to develop, produce, and bring to market appropriate cost competitive and safe products that can replace PVC and other chlorinated plastics.
- 4) Urges governments to take action that encourages the phase out of PVC in medical devices.