

## The Hazard of Arts and Crafts



People don't normally link arts and crafts with illness and hospitalizations. But it happens. Many supplies used for arts and crafts projects contain highly toxic substances that when inhaled, ingested, or absorbed through the skin can cause major illness and even brain damage.

Although law mandates it, many product manufacturers fail to label the containers accurately. For this reason, you may think a product is safe for use when, in fact, it is causing you and others bodily harm.

### Know Your Products

Your best protection is to become knowledgeable about the products that you use regularly. Read all labels for ingredients and warnings. Follow all directions and precautions precisely. You can obtain "Material Safety Data Sheets" from the manufacturer of the products you use.

Keep a list of the products you use and their major ingredients. During your regular check-up, share the list with your doctor and discuss the potential side effects of working with such chemicals. Symptoms of poisoning can go undetected, but if your doctor knows you have regular exposure, he or she may give you a test that could save your life.

### What "Non-Toxic" Really Means

Most of the products you use probably say "non-toxic" somewhere on the bottle. This label is misleading, however. In order to carry the "non-toxic" tag, a product has to pass a test for short-term toxicity, but not one for long-term effects. This means that those so-called "non-toxic" products could very well cause cancer, asthma, cumulative brain damage, immune system dysfunction, chronic dermatitis, and many other ailments. Not so harmless, is it?

### Work Safely

All workspaces for arts and crafts projects should be isolated from common classroom space. Often, the chemicals in different products release dangerous fumes.

Make sure that your work area has proper ventilation at all times. Clean up regularly with wet clothes as opposed to brooms that can disperse toxic dusts.

Always protect yourself while working. Wear proper gear including a debris mask, protective goggles, and gloves when necessary. Remember that chemicals can seep into your skin, and wash all exposed areas frequently.