

Toxic substances in plastic wastes and their impact on human health in Azerbaijan

Plastic waste is becoming one of the most pressing environmental problems all over the world, and Azerbaijan is no exception. In recent decades, the use of plastic products has increased significantly due to their availability and versatility. However, as their use increases, the amount of waste increases, which has a significant impact on the ecosystem and human health. Therefore, it is crucial to assess the impact of plastic products and the chemicals they contain, such as bisphenol-A (BPA), phthalates and flame retardants, on public health. As the survey we conducted during the project showed, the problem lies in the lack of awareness of the general public, manufacturers and other stakeholders about the toxic components of plastics.

Toxic substances in plastics and their health effects

Plastics contain many chemicals that pose serious health risks. Among them, the following are of particular interest:

- Bisphenol-A (BPA) - used in the manufacture of plastics and resins, can mimic the hormone estrogen, disrupting the endocrine system. This leads to hormonal imbalances, infertility and an increased risk of diseases such as breast cancer, type 2 diabetes and obesity. Studies show that more than 90% of people have traces of BPA in their bodies.
- Phthalates are a group of chemicals used to make plastics more flexible and stronger. These substances enter the body through the skin, respiratory system or food, causing reproductive problems, hormonal imbalances and cancer.
- Flame retardants - these substances added to plastics to make them flame retardant can adversely affect the nervous system, impair child development and cause endocrine disorders.

Burning plastic further exacerbates the problem by releasing dangerous chemicals such as dioxins, which have carcinogenic properties. These substances accumulate in fatty tissues, posing a threat to human health. The lack of effective neutralization methods exacerbates the problem.

It is also important to note that public awareness of the dangers of plastic, especially in rural areas, remains low. To address this problem, social and educational campaigns aimed at raising environmental awareness are needed.

Regulation and management of plastic waste

Azerbaijan has made efforts to address the problem of plastic waste in recent years. The government has introduced recycling programs, including the collection of PET bottles and the development of recycling facilities. However, a comprehensive national policy to minimize the use of hazardous chemicals in plastic production has not yet been developed.

Situation with bisphenol A (BPA) in Azerbaijan

Currently, there are no strict regulations restricting the use of BPA in Azerbaijan. However, some companies, such as EL-PLASTIC LLC, have switched to using BPA-free plastic for food packaging, adhering to international safety standards. This initiative can serve as an example for other manufacturers.

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