

Sex toys 'safer' than kids' toys: Swedish study

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Fewer sex toys contain dangerous chemicals than children's toys, a Swedish inspection authority said in a report published on Monday.

In its study conducted in 2016, two percent of the 44 surveyed sex toys that had been imported to Sweden contained banned chemicals, the Swedish Chemicals Agency said.

In a separate study the year before, the agency tested 112 toys in Sweden and found that 15 percent contained banned chemical substances, including lead.

"This was a bit surprising," Frida Ramstrom, an inspector for the agency, told AFP. "This was the first time we did such a study."

Of the 44 sex products examined, only one plastic dildo was found to contain a banned substance: chlorinated paraffins which is suspected of causing cancer, the agency said.

The agency said it was difficult to determine why more children's toys contained dangerous chemicals.

One contributing factor however was that sex toys were often imported by larger companies, which could exert more pressure on manufacturers to avoid harmful chemicals, whereas children's toys were more often imported by smaller companies which had less power to make such demands, according to Bjorn Malmstrom, a spokesman for the chemical agency.

Swedish law stipulates that chemicals in children's toys "must never pose a risk to human health".

Three of the 44 examined sex toys, made of artificial leather and bondage tape, contained a type of phthalates used as a plasticiser at levels above a 0.1 percent threshold, the agency said.

That specific type of phthalates is not banned in sex toys but is on the EU list of chemicals of "very high concern" as it can affect the body's hormonal balance and cause infertility.

Companies are therefore required to inform consumers if a product contains more than 0.1 percent.

The global market for sex products is estimated at about \$20 billion (18.6 billion euros) a year, according to British marketing research group Technavio.

It is expected to grow by nearly seven percent per year between 2016 and 2020.

Americans and Chinese are among the biggest consumers of sex toys, according to Technavio.

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