

Why Choose PVC for Healthcare: Safe, Cost-Efficient and Circular



The Best Price-Performance Ratio

In the face of changing demographics and a surge in healthcare needs, it is crucial to choose materials that offer the best price-performance ratio. PVC, or polyvinyl chloride, is a versatile plastic used extensively in the healthcare sector due to its unique functional properties and cost-effectiveness.

A shift to other materials could increase costs by 30%, with dramatic effects on procurement budgets. Further, replacing PVC in medical equipment may be associated with a potential decrease in quality.¹

PVC is indispensable in the healthcare sector, being vital for devices such as blood bags, medical tubing, diagnostic equipment, hospital interiors, pipes, windows, and cables. In fact, nearly 30% of all disposable medical devices are made from PVC.



An Industry Committed to Innovation

The European PVC industry is committed to innovation and sustainability. Over the past two decades, it has demonstrated a strong commitment to environmental stewardship and safety. This commitment is deeply rooted in the industry's understanding and acknowledgement of the valid concerns raised by NGOs such as Health Care Without Harm.

The industry has proactively phased out harmful additives, such as lead stabilisers, across EU-27 by 2015, outpacing regulatory requirements. The focus continues to be on the replacement of harmful additives as part of voluntary measures, showcasing the ongoing commitment to environmental health and safety

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Safe Alternatives to DEHP Phthalate

The European PVC industry has been a leader in efforts to replace phthalates that have been identified as Substances of Very High Concern and classified under EU chemical regulations with safer alternative plasticisers.

High molecular weight phthalates and other plasticisers currently in use have undergone rigorous safety evaluations and have been approved by European regulators. The industry endorses and supports the necessity for continued research and comprehensive risk assessments of these alternatives.



Recyclability: A Step Towards Circular Healthcare

Contrary to the assertion that PVC has no place in a circular economy, the PVC industry has evidenced a vibrant role in this area. Over the years, the industry has intensified efforts in PVC recycling. In 2022, more than 810,000 tonnes of PVC were recycled.

An inspiring example of this effort is the successful recycling of DEHP-free medical PVC, used in 16 Belgian hospitals, into durable wall coverings. This innovative solution not only extends the lifecycle of PVC products but also underscores the industry's commitment to addressing the full lifecycle impacts of PVC production, use, and disposal.

Reference:

1. European Commission, Directorate-General for Environment, (2022). The use of PVC (poly vinyl chloride) in the context of a non-toxic environment – Final report, Publications Office of the European Union. <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2779/375357>, p. 296