

Bisphenol (BPA)

What is it?

Bisphenol A, more commonly known as BPA, is an organic compound that has been used for more than 50 years in the manufacturing of many hard plastic items and in the linings of metal cans.

What is it used for?

It is used in food and beverage packaging, such as plastic water bottles, infant bottles, and hard plastic dishes. BPA is also found in the linings of metal food and beverage cans, bottle tops, and water supply pipes. BPA can be used to make compact discs, impact-resistant safety equipment, and medical devices. Some dental sealants and composites may also contain BPA. Sometimes BPA is used to make thermal paper, the type of paper used in sales receipts; self-adhesive labels; lottery tickets; and fax paper.

Why is there concern?

With the combination of consumer BPA exposure and the advent of super-precise measuring instruments, it is not surprising that in a 2003-2004 biomonitoring program the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) found that nearly all people are exposed to low levels of BPA.¹

Is it safe? What is the safe level of use?

The widespread finding prompted more research that demonstrated BPA does in fact migrate from the food-contact container, such as water bottles and canned foods, to the food product. With that said, one must remember that it is the dose that makes the poison, paraphrased from the 16th century father of toxicology, Paracelsus. The dose, or consumer dietary intake, of BPA was measured in a study by Health Canada in 2008.² Results of the study—which were in accord with those in U.S., EU, and Japan—demonstrated that dietary intake of BPA is well below the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) level of toxicological concern. Additionally, even though infant BPA exposure was well under the EPA level, it was up to three times higher than estimated in other age groups.

What is being done?

Consumer demand warranted action by industry to reduce any risk, both real and perceived, of BPA packaging to infants. Although research is ongoing to find a safe alternative for BPA, supermarkets and manufacturers in the food industry have taken steps to reduce BPA exposure to infants through the use of alternative materials in the lining of cans, baby bottles, and other food packaging.

In March of 2012, FDA reviewed scientific evidence to evaluate a 2008 petition prohibiting BPA use with food packaging. Based on the scientific evidence demonstrating the safety of BPA in food-contact packaging, FDA did not support the petition. However, FDA does support both an industry reduction of BPA baby bottles and new studies on the safety of BPA.

Summary:

FMI continues to support FDA in their efforts to evaluate studies investigating the impact of BPA food packaging on public health.



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Referenced sources for BPA:

¹ http://www.cdc.gov/biomonitoring/BisphenolA_FactSheet.html

² http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/securit/packag-emball/bpa/bpa_hra-ers-2012-09-eng.php

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