



UPDATE

Bisphenol A (BPA)

- Bisphenol A, more commonly known as BPA, is an industrial chemical that has been used for more than 40 years in the manufacture of many hard plastic items and in the linings of metal cans.
- Humans have many sources of exposure to BPA. It is used in some packaging and utensils for food and beverages such as plastic water bottles and infant bottles, children's drinking cups 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 contribute to BPA exposure. Sometimes BPA is used to make thermal paper, the type of paper used in sales receipts, self-adhesive labels, lottery tickets, and fax paper.
- With so much exposure to BPA in our everyday lives, it is not surprising that in one study the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) found low levels of BPA in 93% of the people tested. Studies employing standardized toxicity tests have thus far supported the safety of current low levels of human exposure to BPA. In 2008, the FDA conducted a review of toxicology research and information on BPA, and, at that time, judged food-related materials containing BPA on the market to be safe.
- Recently BPA has emerged as a potential public health concern, especially for infants and children. One reason people may be concerned about BPA is because human exposure to BPA is widespread. Recent studies, using newer and more sophisticated methods, have reported subtle effects of low doses of BPA in laboratory animals. While BPA is not proven to be harmful, these newer studies have led federal health officials to express some concern about possible BPA effects on infants and children.
- It is clear that public health officials, scientists and doctors need more research to better understand the potential human health effects of exposure to BPA. Therefore, the government is investing millions of dollars in research to determine the possible health effects of BPA, especially on infants and children.
- In the interim, supermarkets and manufacturers in the food industry have taken steps to reduce exposure to BPA in infants and children by stopping the manufacture and sale of infant bottles and children's drinking cups made with BPA. The food industry is also investigating alternatives to BPA as a protective liner on the inside of metal cans.
- An environmental organization recently conducted an independent study and reported finding BPA in some cash register receipts. It is already known that BPA may be used by some manufactures in the production of "thermal paper" (paper in which the print is created by the application of heat rather than using ink) including sales receipts, self-adhesive labels, lottery tickets, adding machine tape and fax paper. Exposure to BPA from this source is extremely low and research data suggests that BPA is not readily absorbed through the skin in normal contact.

- The government has launched a major research effort to determine whether BPA poses human health risks. While recent assessments by authorities in the United States, Canada, Europe, and Japan agree that current food contact uses of BPA are safe, these assessments have identified the need to better understand the health effects of BPA so informed public health decisions can be made.
- FMI encourages and supports legislation (HR 2749) that would require FDA to continue to pursue studies, seek input from all stakeholders and provide clarity on potential health effects from BPA exposure.

Other sources of information:

An overview of BPA from the Food and Drug Administration:

Update on Bisphenol A for Use in Food Contact Applications (January 2010)
<http://www.fda.gov/NewsEvents/PublicHealthFocus/ucm197739.htm#studies>

Guidance and Q&A's for parents from Health and Human Services:

Bisphenol A (BPA) Information for Parents
<http://www.hhs.gov/safety/bpa/>

Explanation of the National Institute of Health findings:

National Toxicology Program "Levels of Concern"
<http://www.niehs.nih.gov/health/docs/bpa-factsheet.pdf>