

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT BISPHENOL A

What is Bisphenol A?

Bisphenol A (BPA) is a chemical produced in large quantities for use primarily in the production of polycarbonate plastics and epoxy resins.

Where is BPA found?

Polycarbonate plastics can be found in some food and drink packaging, DVDs, impact-resistant safety equipment, and medical devices. Epoxy resins are used to coat metal products such as food cans, bottle tops, and water supply pipes.

How does BPA get into the body?

Food and beverages are the main source of exposure to BPA. Air, dust, and water are other possible sources.



BPA can leach into food from the protective internal epoxy resin coatings of canned foods and from consumer products such as polycarbonate tableware, food storage containers, and water bottles. The degree to which BPA leaches from polycarbonate bottles into liquid may depend more on the temperature of the liquid or bottle than the age of the container. BPA can also be found in breast milk.

Why are people concerned about BPA?

One reason people are concerned is that almost everyone is exposed to BPA. The 2003-2004 National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES III) conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) found BPA in 93% of 2,517 urine samples from people six years and older. Another reason, especially for parents, is that some animal studies show effects in fetuses and newborns exposed to BPA.

Is BPA safe?

According to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the currently approved uses of BPA in food containers and packaging are safe. Small amounts of BPA may potentially migrate from food packaging into foods or beverages, but the amounts ingested have not been shown to be harmful.

Does exposure to BPA cause health problems?

According to a final report released on September 3, 2008, by the National Toxicology Program (NTP) of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) (<http://ntp.niehs.nih.gov/>), current human exposure to BPA is of "some concern" for effects on the brain, behavior, and prostate gland in fetuses, infants, and children. This means the potential for health effects exists but more research is needed to find out if there is any harm.

The FDA did a full safety assessment on BPA in food contact applications in 2008, with an update in 2009 for new “low-dose” studies, and a Working Group reviewed new studies in 2011, 2012, and 2014. Their conclusion is that the amount of BPA in the diet does not cause harm.

Is VDH going to ban BPA?

No. Authority to ban BPA in consumer products rests with the FDA. The FDA continues to conduct safety reviews of scientific evidence regarding BPA.

If I am concerned, what can I do to prevent exposure to BPA?

Animal studies suggest that infants and children may be the most vulnerable to any harmful effects of BPA. Parents and caregivers can make the personal choice to reduce exposure for their family by following some suggestions by the NTP:

- Don't microwave polycarbonate plastic food containers. Polycarbonate is strong and durable, but over time it may break down from overuse at high temperatures.
- Avoid using polycarbonate plastic food containers with the number “7” on the bottom.
- Don't wash polycarbonate plastic containers in the dishwasher with harsh detergents.
- Reduce your use of canned foods. Eat fresh or frozen foods.
- When possible, use glass, porcelain, or stainless steel containers, particularly for hot food or liquids.
- Use baby bottles and toys that are labeled “BPA-free”.



In 2012 the FDA removed the allowance for BPA to be used in baby bottles and sippy cups since manufacturers voluntarily discontinued BPA in these products in response to consumer concerns. Baby bottles and sippy cups purchased after this date should not contain BPA, although it may be used in other dishes intended for children.

Where can my physician or I get more information?

Additional information can be found at the following links:

NTP, Bisphenol A (BPS) fact sheet.

https://www.niehs.nih.gov/research/supported/assets/docs/a_c/bpa_fact_sheet_508.pdf

FDA, 2014 Updated safety assessment of Bisphenol A (BPA) for use in food contact applications.

<https://www.fda.gov/downloads/NewsEvents/PublicHealthFocus/UCM424266.pdf>

If you need further information regarding the health effects of bisphenol A, please contact the Virginia Department of Health, Division of Environmental Epidemiology, 109 Governor Street, 4th Floor, Richmond, VA 23219, or call (804) 864-8182.

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