What is Bisphenol A (BPA)?

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

Who is exposed to BPA?

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.

How can BPA affect my health?

According to a final report released on September 3, 2008, by the National Toxicology Program (NTP) of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) (https://ntp.niehs.nih.gov/results/areas/bpa/index.html), 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 Food and Drug Administration (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.

How likely is BPA to cause cancer?

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) have not yet assessed BPA for cancer risk.

How can BPA affect children?

Animal studies suggest that infants and children may be the most vulnerable to any harmful effects of BPA, which may include effects on the brain, behavior, and prostate gland.

Is there a medical test to determine whether I have been exposed to BPA?

Urine testing can detect BPA, but because everyone is exposed to BPA and we do not know what levels of BPA might be associated with detrimental effects, testing for BPA is not recommended.

How can I reduce the risk of exposure to 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”.

Has the federal government made recommendations to protect human health?

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. The EPA has established a reference dose (RfD) of 0.05 milligrams per kilogram of body weight per day (mg/kg/day) for BPA.

Where can I get more information on BPA?

- If you have concerns about BPA, contact your healthcare provider.
- Call your local health department. A directory of local health departments is located at https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/local-health-districts/. Contact the Virginia Department of Health at (804) 864-8182 or at toxicology@vdh.virginia.gov .
- Visit the National Toxicology Program (NTP) at https://www.niehs.nih.gov/research/supported/assets/docs/a_c/bpa_fact_sheet_508.pdf or the Food and Drug Administration (FDA)’s updated safety assessment of BPA in food contact applications at https://www.fda.gov/downloads/NewsEvents/PublicHealthFocus/UCM424266.pdf.

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