

Q&A on BPA for Parents

Q: What is BPA?

A: Many food and liquid containers are either made with plastics or have a protective liner that contain the chemical bisphenol A (BPA). BPA is used to harden plastics, keep bacteria from growing in foods, and prevent cans from rusting.

Q: Where is BPA found?

A: Plastics containing BPA include some water and infant bottles. Food cans, including some cans used for infant formula, and some can and bottle tops, may be coated with plastics containing BPA.

Q: How does BPA enter the body?

A. The most common way people are exposed to BPA is from foods or drinks packaged or prepared in containers that contain BPA. BPA from the plastic or protective liner can then transfer into the food we eat. The temperature of the contents determine how much BPA passes into food from the container.

Q: Why is there so much discussion over BPA lately?

A: Two reasons.

- ◆ BPA may have harmful effects on people. Animal studies have shown that BPA can change some normal functions of the body. Babies and children seem to be at most risk, since their bodies are growing and changing so quickly.
- ◆ There is a concern that exposure to BPA is widespread. Studies have found that more than 90% of people tested had BPA in their urine, which means it was in their bodies. BPA can also be found in breast milk.

BPA has been measured in liquid concentrate infant formula in higher amounts than found in breast milk. It appears that BPA is below detectable levels in powdered infant formula.

Q: What steps can parents take to reduce BPA getting into the bodies of infants?

A: Try not to use clear plastic bottles or containers with the recycling #7 and the letters "PC" imprinted on them. Many of these contain BPA.

- ◆ Consider using plastic bottles labeled "BPA Free".
- ◆ Use bottles made of a cloudy, or frosted looking plastic. These bottles do not contain BPA.
- ◆ Glass bottles can be used, but be mindful of the risk of injury to you or your baby if the bottle is dropped or broken.
- ◆ Because heat may cause the release of BPA from plastic, consider the following:
 - Do not boil plastic bottles
 - Do not heat plastic bottles in the microwave
 - Do not wash plastic bottles in the dishwasher

Q: Are there other things I should consider?

A: It is recommended that if you have additional questions on this issue that you ask for advice from your baby's doctor. Using powdered infant formula combined with "BPA Free" bottles will result in less exposure to BPA than if you use concentrate formula. If you are thinking about switching from concentrate to powdered formula, be sure to follow the mixing directions carefully, as they often differ from one another.

- ◆ If your baby is on special formula because of a medical condition, you should not switch to another formula, as the known risks would be greater than any possible risk from BPA.
- ◆ If increased discussion on BPA has made you afraid to give your infant any manufactured formula, please be aware that the danger of giving your baby homemade condensed milk formulas, whole milk, soy or goat milk is far worse than the possible risks of BPA.

Q: What about breastfeeding?

A: Breast milk also contains low levels of BPA. The presence of BPA in breast milk is a direct result of the diet of the mother. Therefore, a mother can reduce how much BPA is in her breast milk by reducing BPA in her diet. One good way to reduce BPA in your diet is by trying not to use clear plastic water bottles or other containers with the recycling #7 and the letters "PC" printed on them.

Breast milk gives a newborn baby both immediate and life long protection against many infections, allergies and diseases. The American Academy of Pediatrics still recommends only breastfeeding for the first 6 months. Breastfeeding, along with starting solid foods, should then continue at least through the first 12 months of age and after that as long as both mother and infant wish.

Links to more information on bisphenol A (BPA) for parents:

www.fda.gov/bbs/topics/NEWS/2008/NEW01908.html

www.niehs.nih.gov/health/docs/bpa-factsheet.pdf

www.aoc.org/PEHSU/documents/bpa_patient_july_8_08.pdf

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