

The **toxic nation** Guide to Bisphenol A

What is Bisphenol A?

Bisphenol A (BPA) is a synthetic chemical compound used in a wide range of consumer products, including hard, clear plastic reusable water bottles and baby bottles, dental sealants and the linings of some food cans. It is classed by the government of Canada as a hormone disruptor.



Who is exposed to Bisphenol A?

Everyone. Bisphenol A is found in many everyday products including food cans, plastic water containers and baby bottles. A study in the US found that 95% of people tested had been exposed to BPA.

Why is it a concern?

Bisphenol A is a hormone disruptor. Studies have linked BPA exposure with such effects as: increased risk of heart disease and diabetes; permanent changes to genital tract; increase prostate weight; decline in testosterone; breast cells predisposed to cancer; prostate cells more sensitive to hormones and cancer; and hyperactivity.

Where is it used?

BPA is primarily used to make polycarbonate plastic food and beverage containers and epoxy resins that are used to line metal cans for food, such as cans of soup. Polycarbonate plastic food and beverage containers that contain BPA will be labeled recycling symbol #7. However, not all recycling symbol #7 containers will be made with BPA.



In May 2010, Environmental Defence released a study tested food from 50 cans for BPA contamination. Over 90% of the food from the cans had detectable levels of BPA, some at higher levels than have been detected in previous studies. Read the study at www.environmentaldefence.ca.

How can I be exposed?

The BPA in products can leach out and be subsequently ingested by people.

What are alternatives to Bisphenol A?

Until there is a ban on bisphenol A, the best alternative is to avoid food and beverage containers that contain the chemical. Use glass or stainless steel refillable drinking bottles, instead of hard plastic ones. For juice or other drinks, it's best to use lined aluminum bottles. Stainless steel bottles are great for water.

For baby bottles, choose glass or look for companies that make hard plastic bottles without bisphenol A. They are often available at health food stores, organic markets and grocery stores and some baby stores.

Avoid eating canned food when you can. Instead of canned vegetables or fruits, choose fresh or frozen ones (they're healthier for you that way, too!). You can also buy many different kinds of

soups and beans in reusable glass jars. And, instead of buying soft drinks in cans, choose glass bottles.

What are hormone disruptors?

Hormone or endocrine disruptors are substances that can interfere with the normal functioning of the hormone system of both people and wildlife in a number of ways to produce a wide range of adverse effects including reproductive, developmental and behavioural problems.



Who is most at risk?

Foetuses, infants and children around puberty. Young children are especially vulnerable because endocrine disruptors affect how their bodies grow and develop. Kids have immature organs, high metabolic rates, relatively low bodyweight, and are going through rapid physical development.

Animal studies show that even low levels of bisphenol A exposure, below the allowable intake set out by Health Canada, can have a range of adverse effects and can interfere with healthy, normal body function and growth. In fact, the average levels reported in people living throughout the developed world are higher than the levels sufficient to cause harm in animals.

What is Canada doing about Bisphenol A?

The Canadian government reviewed BPA to determine if it posed a risk to human health or the environment in 2008. After their review, the federal government set an international precedent by concluding that it poses a risk to both human health and the environment. It also set a precedent by proposing that BPA be designated as "toxic" in Canada, that there be reduction targets for the amount that can be found in infant formula, and that it be banned in baby bottles. To date, only a ban from its use in baby bottles has been put in place.

Although BPA can be passed from pregnant women to their fetuses, and although fetuses are particularly vulnerable to its potential health effects, there is currently no proposal for BPA to be banned or restricted in all food and beverage containers in Canada.

BPA is being monitored in 5,000 Canadians as a part of the Canadian Health Measures Survey, the results of which are expected to be published sometime in 2010.

What can I do to help?

- Sign up for Toxic Nation e-news (www.toxicnation.ca)
- Tell your friends and family about bisphenol A and our Toxic Nation campaign. Let them know to register for our Toxic Nation e-newsletter.
- Check out the "news articles", "chemicals and health", and "Bisphenol A" sections on our website (www.toxicnation.ca) and read all our latest blog, newest research and important news about Bisphenol A.
- Go online or call our office at 1(877) 399-2333 or (416) 323-9521 to support our work today. Our campaign depends on your generous donations. Thank you.

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