



Letter to the editor: The Pundit Speaks
By Randolph M. Howes, M.D., Ph.D.
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"BPA: A New Scare"

Bisphenol-A (BPA) is an antioxidant that is found in the lining of canned foods, cash register receipts, dental fillings, some plastics and polycarbonate bottles marked with the number 7. BPA is best known as a hardening agent in plastic bottles and used to line the inside of metal cans. Scientific studies have linked BPA at lower levels than those found in the Harvard study to cardiovascular disease, diabetes and obesity in humans. More than 1 million pounds of BPA are released into the environment each year and most Americans have BPA in their urine. Early in 2011, the European Union banned the use of BPA in the manufacture of baby bottles and its use in infant food containers is also restricted in Canada as well as 10 US states. The focus has been on the ingestion of BPA by children in baby bottles or in sippy cups, but attention is now being turned to unsafe adult ingestion of BPA, especially in canned goods. BPA has been shown to suppress the early production of testosterone and lab studies in cells and animals have linked chronic BPA exposure to cancer, infertility, diabetes and obesity. BPA is an endocrine disruptor that can interfere with reproductive development in animal studies at low levels. A new randomized study by Harvard researchers, published in JAMA, quantifies BPA levels in humans after ingestion of canned foods. People who ate canned soup for five days straight saw their urinary levels of the chemical bisphenol A spike 1,200% compared to those who ate fresh soup. The drinking of beverages that have been stored in certain hard plastics can increase the amount of BPA in your body and this study suggests that canned foods may be an even greater concern, especially given their wide use. In September 2011, France's Agency for Food Health Safety (Anses) requested tougher preventive measures, warning that even "low doses" of the chemical caused a "confirmed" effect on lab animals and a "suspected" effect on humans. Anses also said, "Preventing exposure to BPA among infants, pregnant or nursing women was a "priority goal." The FDA has opted to wait for more evidence before taking action on BPA and the Campbell Soup Company said the company is confident in the safety of its products (Mmm mmm good??). The American Chemistry Council said BPA is safe and consumers should not alter their behavior as a result of new FDA warnings. Yet, there was a shocking rise in urinary BPA after just one 12-ounce serving of canned soup.

In the America that I love, we will remain skeptical of statements issued by the government or by those profiting from the products under question. Fresh soup beats Campbell's "cans down."

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