

Federal Legislation To Ban Bisphenol A in Food Containers

In March 2009, Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) and Rep. Edward Markey (D-MA) introduced the Ban Poisonous Additives Act of 2009, which would ban Bisphenol A (BPA) from food and beverage containers, including cans and plastic containers. The Breast Cancer Fund worked closely with them to help craft a strong bill that protects us and our children from future breast cancer risk.

Bisphenol A (BPA) is an estrogenic chemical that not only elevates the risk of breast cancer but also interferes with chemotherapy treatment for the disease. Even at very low doses, BPA presents a risk to human health. It's at the top of our list of chemicals that should be eliminated from our everyday lives.

BPA is truly an everyday chemical, showing up in everything from CDs to dental sealants. However, according to the National Institutes of Health, our primary source of BPA exposure is food and drinks; this is because BPA is used in the resin that lines most food cans and is also used in hard, clear plastics used to make water and baby bottles and food storage containers.



BPA and Breast Cancer

Bisphenol A was initially marketed as a synthetic estrogen (replaced by DES, a carcinogen whose effects are still felt generations later) and was later discovered to be an effective additive to create hard plastics. Increased estrogen exposure from a variety of sources has been linked to early puberty and heightened breast cancer risk, among other health effects. BPA specifically has been shown to induce cell proliferation in human breast cells. Recent research suggests that it interferes with chemotherapy treatment as well.

Children's developing bodies, beginning in the womb, are particularly sensitive to the estrogenic effects of BPA. In utero exposure to BPA has been shown to cause mammary tumors in animals.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has found that 93% of Americans tested have BPA in their bodies, and children have higher levels than adults. Studies by the Food and Drug Administration, Health Canada, and others have documented that BPA leaches into canned infant formula and out of polycarbonate baby bottles.



FDA Failure

Despite all evidence to the contrary, the FDA maintains that BPA is safe. According to an April 11 report from McClatchy Newspapers, "[an] international consortium of industry, academic, and government scientists has rejected as incomplete and unreliable the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's case that a chemical found in food containers

and other household products is safe." A 2008 Congressional inquiry found that the FDA relied on just two studies – both funded by the chemical industry – in declaring BPA safe and ignored the more than 100 peer-reviewed studies by government and university researchers that linked BPA to negative health effects. Even the FDA's own science panel has raised concern about BPA, but thus far, the FDA has taken no action.

Mounting Concern – and Movement

We're not the only people concerned about BPA. In fact, 19 municipalities have introduced legislation that would ban BPA from food containers, and Canada has banned its use in baby bottles. Some manufacturers of baby bottles and sport water bottles have stopped using it, including Nalgene and six leading baby bottle makers; and, some retailers have stopped selling certain products that contain BPA, including Walmart and Toys 'R' Us.

It's all movement in the right direction, but there are still a lot of food and beverage products being made and sold that contain BPA. We want to make sure that all products are safe, and that's why we're advocating passage of the federal BPA Act.



This material was taken from the Breast Cancer Fund web site at www.breastcancerfund.org.

Get Involved

The Maine Commissioner of the Department of Environmental Protection has the authority to require alternatives to the most toxic chemicals; join us to urge him to **get BPA out of our bodies!**

Visit our web site, www.mainewomen.org, to learn more about what's happening and to sign our online petition to Commissioner David P. Littell.

Here's what the petition says:

Dear Commissioner Littell,

Every Maine woman deserves to know that the products she uses are safe, but a growing body of evidence suggests that chemicals in everyday consumer products are harming our health and fertility.

One of the "worst-of-the-worst" toxic chemicals, Bisphenol A (BPA), is found in reusable water bottles, baby bottles, pacifiers, plastic utensils, children's toys, compact discs, and certain microwaveable and reusable plastic containers.

Nearly 200 scientific studies show that exposures to low doses of BPA are associated with a wide range of adverse health effects in later life, including increased risk of breast cancer, early puberty in girls, infertility in men, neurobehavioral problems, and autism. Despite this evidence, BPA is still in widespread use.

It's time for Maine to take action. In order to protect the health of Maine women, please act quickly to add BPA to Maine's list of "chemicals of high concern" and require that it be replaced with safer alternatives.

