

Information about BPA (bisphenol A) for Parents

What is BPA?

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

Where is BPA found?

BPA is found in plastics used to make some water and infant baby bottles. Polycarbonate plastic is hard and clear and marked with the recycle #7 label. Food cans — including some cans used for infant formula and some can and bottle tops — may be coated with plastics containing BPA. BPA has been measured in liquid concentrate infant formula. It appears that the amount of BPA found in powdered infant formula is so low that it cannot be detected.

How does BPA enter the body?

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 pass into the food we eat. The temperature of the contents determine how much BPA passes into food from the container.

Why is there so much talk about BPA?

BPA may have harmful effects on people. Scientific studies of animals 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 percent of people tested had BPA in their urine, which means it was in their bodies.

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

- 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:
 - Do not boil plastic bottles.
 - Do not heat plastic bottles in the microwave.
 - Do not wash plastic bottles in the dishwasher.

Are there other things I should consider?

If you have more questions about BPA, ask your baby’s doctor for advice. 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 are often different 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 debate about BPA has made you afraid to give your infant any manufactured formula, 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.

What about breastfeeding?

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 immediate and lifelong protection against many infections, allergies and diseases. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends breastfeeding only for a baby's 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 desire.

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

Food & Drug Administration

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

National Institutes of Health/U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services

www.niehs.nih.gov/health/docsbpa-factsheet.pdf

Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Units

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