

BPA and the Lagging Law

The American Medical Association supports banning the sale of baby bottles and infant feeding cups containing bisphenol A (BPA), a compound used to harden plastics, due to the numerous studies that suggest negative health effects to be associated with BPA. Although the Food and Drug Administration determined materials containing BPA in the foods market to be safe, Canada, Japan and countries in the European Union have found BPA to be dangerous enough to impose a ban on its use in baby bottles.

Despite being one of the highest volume chemicals produced worldwide, BPA remains controversial as a possible cause of serious health concerns in humans. BPA can act as a synthetic estrogen and bind to several types of receptors in the body, and animal studies implicate BPA to be involved in many different disorders including attention deficit disorder, obesity, heart disease, type 2 diabetes, sexual dysfunction, recurrent miscarriage, premature puberty, and cancer to date.

BPA has been found in over 90% of American adults, with even higher amounts in children. Since BPA can cross the placenta and reach the fetus, health regulators are especially concerned with exposure of pregnant women and accumulation in fetuses. A recent study of placental cells suggests BPA to play a role in various negative pregnancy outcomes such as preeclampsia, prematurity and miscarriage.

So far, there have been limited human studies on BPA, and defenders of BPA question the research practices used for investigating BPA. However, in human studies, a high amount of BPA in urine has been associated with cardiovascular problems, type 2 diabetes and metabolic abnormalities. Ten states have banned children's products containing BPA, as have many large retailers including Target, Toys R Us, Walmart and Sears.

The Natural Resources Defense Council filed a lawsuit against the Food and Drug Administration in 2010 for its failure to respond to a petition to ban BPA from food materials. Playtex, Nalgene, Avent America and Philips Electronics North America are among the larger corporations that have been the subject of class-action suits for products containing BPA.

Will BPA turn out to be an overhyped and unfounded medical scare like the alleged link between vaccines and autism, or will BPA become the next asbestos? The National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences continues the investigation by providing millions of dollars in funding to find out.