

# Consumer advocates find BPA in food packaging

November 3 2009, By Andrew Zajac

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A consumer advocacy group's analysis of canned goods has found measurable levels of the chemical additive bisphenol A across a range of foods, including some labeled "BPA-free."

Children eating multiple servings of some of the tested food could get doses of [BPA](#) "near levels that have caused adverse effects in several animal studies," according to the survey by Consumers Union, a nonprofit organization that publishes Consumer Reports.

The findings bolster the case for banning BPA from use in materials that come in contact with food and beverages, such as can linings, [baby bottles](#) and sippy cups, the group said in a letter to [Food and Drug Administration](#) Commissioner Margaret Hamburg.

An FDA spokesman had no immediate comment but noted that a review of existing evidence about BPA's health effects is nearly complete and that Hamburg will "make a decision how to proceed" by the end of the month.

BPA is a plastic hardener and a component of [epoxy resin](#). Some studies have linked the chemical to reproductive abnormalities and increased risk of cancer and diabetes, and several governments have prohibited the sale of baby bottles made with BPA.

The FDA released a draft report in 2008 that found that BPA was safe in food contact materials. But critics charged that the FDA had based its

report on out-of-date studies sponsored by the chemical industry, prompting the review.

A spokesman for the American Chemistry Council said the Consumers Union findings are "inconsistent with the conclusions of expert regulators worldwide, all of which have confirmed that BPA exposure levels are low, and well within safety standards."

Consumers Union tested 19 name-brand foods in metal, paper and plastic packages. The tests were "a snapshot of the marketplace" and not intended as conclusive evidence of BPA levels in any given brand or type of product.

No BPA was detected in paper canisters of Similac powdered Advance Infant Formula and Nestle Juicy Juice packed in juice boxes, the group said.

But multiple servings of canned food with levels of BPA comparable to those found in a can of Del Monte Fresh Cut Blue Lake Green Beans would give a small child an amount of the chemical approaching the level at which animal studies showed adverse effects, such as abnormal reproductive development.

That is far more than would be considered acceptable when factoring in margins of safety built into food safety assessments, said Dr. Urvashi Rangan, Consumers Union's director of technical policy.

A Del Monte spokeswoman said BPA "is the best method available on the market today for food preservation" and that the company is closely following the FDA's review.

Rangan said she was surprised by the wide variety of BPA levels found in the survey. "We think it's exemplary of a bigger problem ... the

contamination of food by a chemical with a lot of potentially harmful effects is not being controlled for," she said.

Consumers Union also found BPA in "BPA-free" cans of tuna sold by Vital Choice, a Washington state-based seafood firm. Rangan said the cans did not have epoxy liners, the usual source of BPA.

Rangan speculated that the BPA likely either leached into the packaging from the factory where it was made, or from environmental sources -- seawater or the fish itself.

Vital Choice Chief Executive Officer Randy Hartnell said his firm was an early adopter of BPA-free packaging. "We'll get to the bottom of it and fix it," he said.

Several major retail chains have removed items containing BPA from their shelves. Six manufacturers of baby bottles agreed in March to stop selling bottles containing BPA in the U.S.

Canada has forbidden use of the chemical in baby bottles. Connecticut, Minnesota, the city of Chicago, and Suffolk County, New York, have banned baby bottles and sippy cups made with BPA.

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