

Watchdog group blasts study that suggests 80 percent of baby formula contains arsenic

November 6 2017, by Howard Cohen, Miami Herald

The watchdog website Snopes has blasted a new study that suggests up to 80 percent of products that we feed to our babies are tainted by arsenic and other potentially harmful contaminants.

The news media has picked up on an "alarming study" by The Clean Label Project, which found many baby food products tested positive for arsenic. Clean Label is a nonprofit that advocates for greater transparency in food labeling.

"You won't believe what we found!" the headline blared from the group's website. Some 80 percent of infant formulas were found to contain arsenic, and other contaminants such as lead and cadmium.

Arsenic, a naturally occurring metal, can cause cancer and skin lesions and has been associated with developmental effects, cardiovascular disease, neurotoxicity and diabetes, according to the World Health Organization.

Of the 530 baby food products that were tested - by familiar names that included Gerber, Enfamil, Earth's Best, Plum Organics and Sprout - Clean Label researchers found that more than half tested positive for arsenic and cadmium, more than a third for lead and 10 percent for acrylamide, a chemical used in treating drinking water and sewage, among other things. These chemicals can affect [fine motor skills](#), development and cognition.

Sites like The New York Daily News, USA Today, The Daily Mail in the UK and South Florida's WSVN 7, CBS4 Miami and WPLG Local 10, among others, ran stories on Clean Label's study.

The group tested baby [food](#), [infant formulas](#), toddler drinks and snacks purchased within the past five months. Certified "organic" had more than twice the [arsenic](#) compared with conventional baby foods that were tested, Clean Label reported. Happy Baby, Beech-Nut and Little Duck Organics were among the five best baby cereals, according to the study; Health Times, Organix, Gerber, Earth's Best and Parent's Choice were the bottom five.

Snopes, however, questioned the study, noting Clean Label Project did not publish its research in a peer-reviewed journal and did not publish any data to substantiate its claims.

"A lack of peer review means that research has not gone through the external, expert scrutiny generally required for such research to be regarded as methodologically sound," Snopes wrote.

Publication in a peer-reviewed journal requires the names of researchers and authors and disclosure of any potential conflicts of interest.

According to Snopes, Clean Label Project did not respond to its request for comment. Clean Label did not return a call from the Miami Herald recently.

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