

Information on Plastics

Bisphenol-A or BPA, is a toxic chemical used to make baby bottles, plastic water bottles, and food and beverage can liners, has been linked to heart disease and diabetes. Products containing or made from Bisphenol A have been in commerce for more than 50 years, and its current uses are numerous. Polycarbonate plastic, which is clear and nearly shatter-proof, is used to make a variety of common products including baby and water bottles, sports equipment, medical and dental devices, lenses, and household electronics. To avoid exposure to BPA caused by leaching, it is recommended to avoid microwaving food in plastic containers, putting plastics in the dishwasher, or using harsh detergents, to avoid leaching. It has been known to leach from the plastic lining of canned foods and, to a lesser degree, polycarbonate plastics that are cleaned with harsh detergents or used to contain acidic or high-temperature liquids, such as coffee, tea, soda etc. Bisphenol A is an endocrine disruptor. An endocrine disruptor can interfere with reproduction, development, and other hormonally mediated processes. Bisphenol A can mimic the body's own hormones, possibly causing negative health effects such as, developmental toxicity, and carcinogenic effects.

But, my product claims that it is “Microwave Safe”?

When the manufacturer designates a plastic container as “microwave safe” this mostly means that it doesn't deform and spill hot foods onto the user during normal use. Patrons concerned about potential exposures are encouraged to keep a ceramic or glass container onsite for microwaving, even if you continue to transport your food in plastic containers.

Determining which plastics to avoid:

Check for the recycling symbol on the item in question. Items #1, #2, #4 and #5 are considered safer plastics.



Found in: Cooking oil bottles, clear food packaging

Why? Number 3 plastics may release toxic breakdown products (including phthalates) into food and drinks. The risk is highest when containers start wearing out, are put through the dishwasher or when they are heated (including microwaved).

Found in: Disposable plates and cups, meat trays, egg cartons, carry-out containers

Why? Number 6 plastics can release potentially toxic breakdown products (including styrene). Get this: particularly when heated!



Found in: Baby bottles, three- and five-gallon water bottles, certain food containers

A wide range of plastic resins that don't fit into the other six categories are lumped into number 7. Some are quite safe, but the ones to worry about are the hard polycarbonate varieties, as found in various drinking containers (like Nalgene bottles) and rigid plastic baby bottles.

Why? Studies have shown polycarbonate can leach bisphenol A, a potential hormone disruptor, into liquids.



References:

<http://afutureinplastics.org/facts.html>
<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=94680753>
<http://jama.ama-assn.org/cgi/content/full/300.11.1303>