Safer Chemicals Healthy Families

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CONGRESSIONAL ACTION NEEDED ON A CHEMICAL OF HIGH CONCERN:

Bisphenol A (BPA)

There is growing agreement across the political spectrum that the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) of 1976 does not adequately protect Americans from toxic chemicals. Change is on the horizon: Congress has now introduced legislation to address TSCA's many shortcomings. We believe that, to be effective, the new legislation must rapidly reduce or eliminate human exposure to the most harmful chemicals—particularly those linked to causing cancer, damaging developing fetuses, or harming the reproductive or nervous system. **We want Congress to take action on chemicals already known to cause harm, like bisphenol A (BPA).***

Chemical summary: BPA at a glance

BPA is a very common chemical found in plastics, food and beverage can linings, and other consumer products. BPA is known to mimic estrogen and, in animal studies, researchers have linked developmental exposure to BPA to reproductive harm, increased cancer susceptibility, and abnormalities in brain development and fat metabolism. There are alternatives to BPA, but manufacturers are not required to use them. In fact, current law does not require manufacturers to disclose whether or not their product contains BPA—leaving consumers in the dark. Dozens of states and municipalities have already passed or are considering legislation to ban BPA from certain products, yet TSCA severely limits federal action. The time has come for Congress to expand public protection from BPA and other dangerous chemicals by passing strong new legislation to overhaul TSCA.

BPA is used in many consumer products

The U.S. produced more than two billion pounds of BPA in 2004. BPA is used to make polycarbonate plastics, which are commonly used in consumer products including baby bottles, sippy cups, and reusable water bottles. Epoxy resins used to coat metal food and beverage cans, including beer and soda cans, are another major use of BPA. BPA also is used in the production of other plastics, including those used for medical devices, for industrial applications (such as adhesives and paints), and in the production of flame retardants and thermal paper (such as those used in cash register receipts). Some polymers used in dental sealants and tooth coatings also contain BPA.

BPA exposure is common

The FDA and the National Institutes of Health state that the primary exposure source for most people is food and beverages contaminated with BPA. BPA has been detected in infant formula, canned food, and canned beverages.

Over 90 percent of people in the United States carry BPA residues in their bodies. The human body breaks down and excretes BPA within a few days, so these consistent measurements in humans mean that we are taking in BPA as fast as our bodies can get rid of it. BPA also has been measured in breast milk, amniotic fluid, and follicular fluid; providing evidence that the developing fetus and infant also are exposed. Premature infants in neonatal intensive care units undergoing treatments were found to have 10 times higher BPA levels than seen in the general public, presumably as a result of BPA leaching from plastic components of medical care devices.

BPA is associated with harmful health effects

BPA is a hormone-disrupting chemical that mimics estrogen, the female sex hormone essential for the development and function of reproductive organs. BPA may also interfere with thyroid hormone, which is important for development of the brain and nervous system. Researchers have linked interference with the action of natural hormones to harmful health effects.

Laboratory animal experiments find that for doses within the range of human exposures, fetal exposure to BPA is linked to developmental and reproductive harm including earlier onset of puberty, increased susceptibility to breast and prostate cancer, and changes in gender-specific behavior caused by altered brain development.

BPA also has been associated with miscarriages and infertility, abnormal chromosomes, abnormalities in fat metabolism, and the development of insulin resistance. In humans, BPA exposure has been linked to miscarriage, erectile dysfunction, diabetes, heart disease, and alterations in toddler behavior.

Evaluations by federal agencies

The U.S. National Toxicology Program (NTP) has expressed "some concern" that BPA exposure in fetuses, infants, and children may increase the risk for neurodevelopmental harm and prostate

cancer. NTP noted that "the possibility that Bisphenol A may alter human development cannot be dismissed."

BPA has been approved as a food additive by the FDA since the 1950s. The most recent FDA re-evaluation concluded that current levels of exposure are "safe," but relied on studies funded by the chemical industry and was sharply criticized by the FDA's own scientific board of advisors for being inconsistent with the available scientific evidence. After a lengthy delay, FDA announced in January 2010 that it agreed with NTP's scientific assessment of BPA, but stopped short of regulating the chemical in our food supply.

In 2010, EPA issued an "action plan" to address BPA under its existing limited authority under TSCA, which also does not call for any immediate regulation of the chemical.

Other countries, some states and regions have taken action

The Canadian Ministry of Health has determined BPA is a "chemical of concern" and has banned the use of BPA in baby bottles and is restricting use in formula cans. Norway, Denmark, and France have taken measures to limit the use of BPA, especially in children's products.

Several counties in New York, the city of Chicago, Illinois, and the states of Connecticut, Minnesota, Maryland, Vermont, Washington and Wisconsin have banned BPA from baby bottles and sippy cups. In addition to banning BPA from these products, Connecticut and Vermont have banned BPA from infant formula and baby food jars, as well as reusable food and beverage containers. Several other states are considering similar bans. In all, over 30 states and municipalities introduced legislation in 2009 to ban or limit exposure to BPA. The Massachusetts Department of Public Health has issued a public health advisory on BPA which advises pregnant women, nursing mothers and parents of children under the age of two to avoid the use of products that contain BPA.

Maine has listed BPA as a "chemical of high concern" for being an endocrine disruptor and developmental toxicant under its law on Toxic Chemicals in Children's Products.

The market is responding

Responding to consumer concerns, many businesses have taken measures to eliminate BPA from their products.

- Wal-Mart, Toys R Us, Target, and Sears are just a few of the national chains that are phasing out baby bottles containing BPA.
- The nation's six largest baby bottle manufacturers announced in 2009 that they either have already eliminated or will phase out BPA.
- Sunoco, a chemical manufacturer, instituted a policy to no longer sell BPA for use in food and water containers intended for children under three.
- Several infant formula makers are already using BPA-free packaging.
- Canned food manufacturers such as Eden's Organics and General Mills' Muir Glen Organic brand are using BPA-free linings for some of their canned food products.

But consumer protection should not be left to voluntary campaigns; Congress should take action to reduce our exposure to harmful chemicals like BPA. Please visit *www.saferchemicals.org* and *www.takeouttoxics.org* for more information on toxic chemicals and legislative efforts to reform TSCA.

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