

# Alphabet soup: BPA, FDA, NRDC

*By ACSH Staff — March 30, 2012*

As part of a legal settlement with the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), the FDA must [decide by tomorrow](#) <sup>[1]</sup> whether it will ban the widely used chemical bisphenol A (BPA). The agency's decision will determine if the chemical used to make polycarbonate plastic can remain in food packaging.

BPA-based plastics have been used for decades to protect against bacteria and food-borne illness. Even so, earlier this month, the [Campbell Soup Company seems to have succumbed to public pressure](#) <sup>[2]</sup> and announced it would be eliminating BPA in the lining of its cans. But one of the biggest questions on everyone's mind is: What will they use as a substitute?

I'm quite curious to know what these companies will replace BPA with, says ACSH's Dr. Elizabeth Whelan. BPA has been widely used for decades, with a proven safety record. How can the NRDC and other environmental activists be so sure that whatever is used to replace it will be safer?

And in fact, a [report by NPR](#) <sup>[3]</sup> this morning touched on this important question. According to their coverage, the alternative chemicals that would replace BPA may be safe, but they haven't been scrutinized nearly as stringently as BPA.

NPR's Morning Edition host interviewed Justin Teeguarden, a toxicologist and senior research scientist at the Pacific Northwest National Research Lab in Richland, Washington, who explained that BPA poses no danger to humans because it is rapidly metabolized and excreted in the urine. Teeguarden was part of a team of researchers who measured BPA concentrations in the blood of 20 adults who spent a day eating a diet high in BPA. Blood samples were collected hourly for 24 hours: BPA concentrations in serum were undetectable in 83 percent of the samples collected, and BPA concentrations were determined to be below or equal to the limits of detection in all samples. As Teeguarden notes, a person would have to consume hundreds or thousands of times more BPA in order to measure significant levels in the blood. Why, then, have other studies detected significant concentrations? Well, it's simple, he says: Sample contamination is a common problem. However, because Teeguarden's lab was aware of this complication beforehand, they were able to avoid it.

ACSH's Dr. Ruth Kava was pleased with NPR's balanced coverage of the issue, and believes that, given such scientifically sound evidence, it sounds fairly likely that BPA won't be banned assuming the FDA will follow the science, that is.

ACSH's Dr. Josh Bloom is a bit more skeptical. I have no doubt that, once the BPA issue is resolved, the NRDC will move to the next one of many candidates on its list of possible scares du jour.

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**Source URL:** <https://www.acsh.org/news/2012/03/30/alphabet-soup-bpa-fda-nrdc>

**Links**

[1] [http://www.philly.com/philly/insights/in\\_the\\_know/145022645.html](http://www.philly.com/philly/insights/in_the_know/145022645.html)

[2] [http://www.acsh.org/factsfears/newsid.3446/news\\_detail.asp](http://www.acsh.org/factsfears/newsid.3446/news_detail.asp)

[3] <http://www.npr.org/2012/03/30/149668771/how-much-bpa-exposure-is-dangerous>