

The Top 10 Unfounded Health Scares of 2012

By ACSH Staff — February 22, 2013

At the American Council on Science and Health, our goal is to increase people's awareness of actual threats to their health smoking, for example without their having to spend time worrying about things that pose no danger at all. Unfortunately, the goals of some politicians, the media, and certain activist groups can be somewhat different they frequently aim to create a sensation and gain publicity without much regard for actual scientific evidence. This annual list of the top 10 health scares aims to quell fears by discussing the real evidence about these unscientific scares.

1 & 2. Phthalates in cosmetics and school supplies

Environmental activist groups have criticized phthalates as being dangerous at the levels they are found in school supplies. They have further claimed that phthalates can cause diabetes in women who are using cosmetics containing phthalates. The scare about phthalates chemicals that are found in many plastic products to make them more flexible, and are commonly used in toys, medical devices and some cosmetics and fragrances is nothing new. In the past, phthalates have supposedly been linked to various health maladies including developmental and reproductive defects. In 2010 ACSH debunked the link between phthalates and their ability to demasculinize boys. But once again, in 2012, we have new, supposedly dangerous, sources of phthalates in consumer products.

Origin of the scare

A study conducted by researchers at Brigham and Women's Hospital and published in the journal *Environmental Health Perspectives* claimed to have found a connection between phthalates in make-up and diabetes in women. Researchers found that those women with high levels of phthalates in their urine had twice the risk of developing diabetes compared to women with low levels of phthalates in their urine. However, no causation could be inferred from this study, because the individuals already had diabetes at the time the study was conducted. An additional study conducted at Uppsala University by Swedish researchers, analyzing blood level data of 1,000 people, suggested that those individuals with higher levels of phthalates in their blood were twice as likely to develop diabetes than those with lower levels. However, this study was conducted in an elderly population, and although it may have shown an association between an increase in certain breakdown products and the presence of Type 2 diabetes, it cannot show that their presence causes diabetes.

Later in 2012, the Center for Health, Environment and Justice put out a report entitled *Hidden Hazards: Toxic Chemicals Inside Children's Vinyl Back-to-School Supplies*, which was meant to

alert parents that 75 percent of children's school supplies tested in a lab had elevated levels of phthalates. These included Disney, Spiderman and Dora-branded school supplies. Author Mike Schade urged Congress to pass the Safe Chemicals Act to protect our children from toxic exposure.

Media coverage

The Center for Health, Environment and Justice held a press event to promote their [new report](#) [1], Hidden Hazards: Toxic Chemicals Inside Children's Vinyl Back-to-School Supplies outside of a Kmart in New York City. This press event was attended by Senator Chuck Schumer, co-sponsor of the Safe Chemicals Act, who was promoting the idea that these chemicals have no place in children's school supplies. Other groups commented on the supposedly high levels of phthalates in school supplies, urging parents to pay attention to this report before buying supplies for their children. These included the New York State Parent Teacher Association, WE Act for Environmental Justice and the New York Public Interest Research Group, among others. Also, as the holiday season approached, the Public Interest Research Group put out reports labeling certain toys containing phthalates as dangerous, specifically a Dora the Explorer backpack. ABC news even put out a [piece](#) [2] advising parents to pay close attention to labels and look out for those toys which contain phthalates, as they can cause severe health problems if ingested.

ABC News covered the [story](#) [3] of phthalates in cosmetic products as a danger to health. And [CBS](#) [4] and [CNN](#) [5] News also picked up on this subject. These scares have led to the development of supposedly chemical-free make-up. Celebrity make-up artist Nakeah Fuller is just one of many who has taken advantage of this hype and launched her own line, free of chemicals such as sulfates, parabens and phthalates.

ACSH perspective

Decades of the widespread use of these toxic chemicals have indicated that they are safe and do not pose any danger to human health. The case of school supplies represents just another instance of activist groups posing as scientific experts repeating baseless allegations that have turned into public hysteria with respect to the diabetes-phthalate scare. There is no biological hypothesis for how this phthalate-diabetes link might work. Furthermore, the studies that attempted to link diabetes and phthalates were based on self-report data, where subjects reported having diabetes and the presence and severity of the diabetes was not ascertained. The studies also were not solely concentrated on particular phthalates in make-up, but rather used a whole mix of phthalates. And no dose response was found, which undermines a possible causation argument.

Bottom line

It is important to consider as well that there is never any mention of what might replace phthalates should they be removed from these products. If they are replaced by untested chemicals, that would provide new targets for anti-chemical hype, says ACSH's Dr. Gilbert Ross. He adds, Such scientific facts receive short shrift while blogger hysteria moves into the media spotlight, where it

needlessly scares the public. There is no valid scientific evidence that warrants this scare, and thus parents should not be discouraged from buying their children toys and school supplies containing phthalates, nor should individuals shun make-up or other cosmetics that contain phthalates.

3&4. Lead levels

Lead can be found in small, approved amounts in many everyday consumer products. These include children's toys, fashion jewelry, garden tools and make-up, among others. For the first time in 20 years, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has lowered the recommended limit for lead exposure in young children and has started to promote the idea that any amount of lead in the blood, no matter how small, is dangerous.

Origin of the scare

In May of this year, the CDC lowered the recommended limit for blood lead levels in young children from 10 micrograms of lead per deciliter of blood to 5 micrograms. The CDC also added the perplexing assertion that any level of lead in the blood has the potential to be a health hazard. The number of children in the United States with lead levels higher than the new standard is about 450,000, as compared to 250,000 under the old standard. In releasing this new recommendation, the CDC shifts the focus from looking specifically at levels of lead in the blood to measures of prevention of any lead exposure through local polices and laws formulated to eliminate supposed lead hazards.

The cosmetics industry also continues to be brought into the public light by the Campaign for Safe Cosmetics, an offshoot of the alarmist Environmental Working Group. After announcing that almost all 400 lipsticks tested by the FDA contained lead, the group's co-founder, Stacy Malkan, wants the FDA to set limits on lead levels in lipsticks and to investigate whether any lead levels pose a threat to pregnant women and children. Their claim was that the minuscule amounts of lead found in these products could cause lead poisoning.

Media coverage

USAToday picked up on the [news story](#) [6], but highlighted an important caveat to the new recommendation. The CDC does not have the resources to implement the new guidelines after funding for lead poisoning prevention was cut by 94% this year. ABC News [picked up](#) [7] on the lead in lipstick story and presented it on Good Morning America, where they ran a test on 22 lipsticks and found that over half did contain at least a trace amount of lead. The Washington Post also put a [spin on it](#) [8], ranking the 10 worst offenders for levels of lead in their lipsticks.

NBC should be commended for their coverage of this scare. In its [report](#) [9], NBC made pointed out that lead in lipstick is not a new concern. They went further, saying that the amount of lead ingested from lipstick is so small that the lead content of lipstick does not pose a safety hazard.

ACSH perspective

In response to the changes in CDC recommendation that no blood lead level is safe, ACSH scientific advisor Dr. Robert Brent, a professor of pediatrics, radiology and pathology at Jefferson Medical College and a researcher at Alfred I. DuPont Hospital for Children in Delaware, says, Any good toxicology scientist knows that the effects of lead have a threshold. What toxicological effects can affect the central nervous system at blood levels below 10 mcg/dL? Furthermore, Dr. Ross adds, It is not scientifically possible to prove that even a minute level of lead in the blood is not a hazard, so those who insist that we should work to eliminate all lead get away with it. This is the precautionary principle at work.

In response to the lead-in-lipstick kerfluffle, the Food and Drug Administration has asserted that there is no cause for alarm. The FDA did not find high levels of lead in lipstick and the levels that were found were so minuscule that they do not raise health concerns or pose a danger to the individuals who use them regularly. Dr. Ross questions whether cosmetics have been shown to be unsafe in any capacity, and ACSH's Dr. Ruth Kava states that campaigns against the alleged effects of cosmetic ingredients may exist for one particular purpose: to generate a new market for so-called natural and organic products.

Bottom line

The CDC's lowered blood lead level recommendation is completely unnecessary and created an unfounded panic among the public. In making this recommendation, the CDC did not take into account the fact that the effects of lead have a threshold, a key parameter in regulating lead. The statement that no blood lead level is safe is erroneous.

It is also unfounded, considering the minuscule amount of lead found in lipstick. This scare has been manufactured by activist groups, notably the Campaign for Safe Cosmetics. The FDA has acknowledged that while certain lipsticks do contain minuscule amounts of lead, it says the levels are too low to worry about. Consumers do not have to worry that their lipsticks may cause detrimental health effects.

5. GMO labeling in California

The debate over the labeling of foods containing genetically engineered organisms (also called GMOs), reached a new high in California this year, where a vote was held in November to determine if the state would institute labeling requirements. But Proposition 37 was defeated and foods containing GMOs will not be labeled in California. The unfounded scare of GMOs, organisms whose genetic material has been altered using genetic engineering techniques, is nothing new. Although these foods have helped to feed many of the world's starving populations and almost all corn and soybeans grown in the U.S. have been genetically modified since 1996, allowing for much greater crop yields, they still continue to be attacked

Origin of the scare

Although GMOs have been attacked since being implemented for use in large-scale food production, the roots of the most recent scare come from anti-biotech groups who called on the FDA to mandate special labeling for foods containing GMOs. These groups began to influence the public, leading to irrational concerns about the potential dangers of GMOs to people and the environment. This attack reached a fever pitch in California, leading up to the November vote of the highly debated issue over whether foods containing GMOs should be labeled. Labeling bills have also been proposed in more than a dozen states in the past year. This debate pitted the organic food industry and so-called consumer groups against more conventional farmers and many of the nation's best-known food brands, such as Kellogg's and Kraft.

Media coverage

Attention was garnered for Proposition 37 by celebrities such as Danny DeVito, Dave Matthews, Bill Maher, Jillian Michaels and Emily Deschanel. A group called [Label It Yourself](#) ^[10] calls on individuals to take labeling matters into their own hands and has used social media, such as Facebook, to draw followers and attention promoting the right to know what is in food. A campaign designed by Gary Hirshberg, chairman of Stonyfield Farms, called [Just Label It](#) ^[11] raised more than \$1 million and attracted various well-known actors, musicians, chefs and health professionals.

Oprah has also spoken out against the use of GMOs, [publishing a story](#) ^[12] in her magazine entitled *5 Ways to Lessen Your Exposure to GMOs*, which contributed to the scare of genetically modified foods. Dr. Mehmet Oz did a [segment](#) ^[13] of his show on GMOs, bringing in expert Jeffrey Smith, who is against the use of GMOs because of supposed health effects. Dr. Oz also went further, showing his support for the labeling of all foods containing GMOs. *The New York Times* jumped on the bandwagon as well, promoting the labeling of foods containing GMOs, with an [opinion piece](#) ^[14] by Mark Bittman, stating that almost everyone wanted to see the labeling of genetically engineered materials contained in their food products. This scare was also covered by various big-name news sites including [CBS](#) ^[15] and [ABC](#) ^[16] News.

ACSH perspective

The FDA has repeatedly said that labeling is not necessary because genetic modification does not alter the food in any substantive way. In fact, Dr. Ross says that it's irresponsible to assert that GMOs pose any dangers to consumers or the environment since billions of tons of crops have been produced using GMO technology and harvested over many years, and still not a single case of adverse health or environmental effects from such farming practices have been documented. Further, our food has been genetically modified since we first started to use agriculture, since we chose the most useful varieties of animals and plants, thus altering their genetics over generations.

For 16 years, almost all processed foods in the United States, including cereals, salad dressings, and snack foods, have contained ingredients from plants whose DNA was manipulated in a laboratory. Almost all corn and soybeans grown in the United States are genetically engineered

and these crops can be useful in meeting the world's expanding food needs. The genes introduced into genetically modified foods have let farmers spray fewer and less harmful chemicals. At its core, it seems likely that the California Labeling Initiative was mainly an effort by organic food growers and environmental groups to drive genetically modified foods off the market. According to Cathleen Enright, an executive vice president at the Biotechnology Industry Organization, representing Monsanto and DuPont, these folks are trying to use politics to do what they can't accomplish at the supermarket, which is increase market share.

Bottom line

Modern biotechnology has greatly benefited the quality and quantity of food. The misinformation promoted to the public by the popular media, portraying GM foods as dangerous, is completely untrue and does not allow consumers to make informed assessments of the foods they chose to eat. Current regulatory scrutiny, plus the excellent track record of GM food safety, gives us confidence that GM foods are rigorously regulated and that the technology is safe. If you are still not convinced that GM foods are safe, think of the 300 million North American consumers who have been eating several dozen GM foods grown on hundreds of millions of acres since 1969, with no documented adverse effects.

6. Caramel coloring in Coke

A caramel coloring ingredient found in sodas, 4-methylimidazole (4-MI or 4-MEI), was labeled as a carcinogen under California's ridiculous Proposition 65. This chemical has been under attack previously by the same Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI), which is bringing it to the forefront again.

Origin of the scare

CSPI is at it again with a renewed war against 4-MI. This comes on the heels of their petitioning the FDA last year to declare 4-MI a carcinogen and ban it from sodas. Earlier this year, it claimed to have found unsafe levels of this chemical in cans of Coca-Cola, Pepsi-Cola, Dr. Pepper and Whole Foods 365 Cola. The group once again asked the FDA to ban caramel coloring agents that contain this chemical, claiming that Coke and Pepsi, with the acquiescence of the FDA, are needlessly exposing millions of Americans to a chemical that causes cancer.

Media coverage

In response to the [report](#) [17] issued by the CSPI, Coca-Cola and Pepsi [announced](#) [18] that they are in the process of reformulating to reduce the amount of 4-MI in their products. The timing of this decision lent even more hype to this scare, as it fell right after CSPI put out their report. In reality, the soda industry had been implementing this reformulation for months to meet the standards of California's Proposition 65.

This scare made headlines in the [LA Times](#) [19], [BBC News](#) [20], [CBS News](#) [21], [FOX News](#) [22] and [NPR](#) [23], among others. The headlines highlighted the purported cancer-causing ingredient found

in sodas, as well as the soda industry's response to these accusations that their products contained carcinogenic ingredients. The scare also made headlines in [Reuters](#) [24], but had a unique, science-based spin. They noted that U.S. regulators said that soft drinks from PepsiCo Inc and Coca-Cola Co. posed no health risk and cited Doug Karas, an FDA spokesman, who said that a consumer would have to consume well over a thousand cans of soda a day to reach the doses administered in the studies that have shown links to cancer in rodents.

ACSH perspective: The FDA has spoken out against the claims put forth by CSPI, as per Doug Karas's comment mentioned above. What CSPI refuses to understand is that just because a chemical causes cancer at high doses in rodents, does not mean that it will cause cancer in humans. After looking at the National Institute of Health's assessment of 4-MI, ACSH's Dr. Josh Bloom found that even the standard test used to assess potential carcinogenicity the Ames Test was negative for the substance. The doses of 4-MI required to kill rodents are sky high, something CSPI conveniently glossed over, he stated.

Much of the hype is due to the fact that soda companies have begun to reformulate their products in response to California's Proposition 65, even though Coca-Cola representative Diana Garza Ciarlante says Coca-Cola believes there is no public health risk that justifies any such change.

We would really like to send a copy of our Holiday Dinner Menu to Michael Jacobson, executive director of CSPI, with commentary by UC-Berkeley biochemists Dr. Bruce Ames and Dr. Lois Swirsky Gold, who say that No human diet can be free of naturally occurring chemicals that are rodent carcinogens. Of the chemicals that people eat, 99.99% are natural

Bottom line

Dr. Bernard Stewart, director of Cancer Services and professor at the Faculty of Medicine, University of New South Wales, Australia, sums up the effects of this unnecessary hype in his commentary in *The Lancet Oncology* saying that Anxiety concerning insidious cancer causations could divert attention from proven means of cancer prevention. The doses of 4-MI necessary to kill rodents are so high, that this chemical should not have been attacked in the first place. Although the soda industry is reformulating products, the previous recipe with 4-MI does not pose a risk to humans and this scare was simply blown out of proportion by the food police at CSPI.

7. Flame retardants/furniture

Flame retardants, which are chemicals used to inhibit or resist the spread of fire, are often used in textiles or furniture. They have been targeted as having the potential to cause cancer and hormone disruption as well as have harmful effects on brain development.

Origin of the scare

Flame retardants have been under attack frequently this year, beginning with a piece in the *New York Times* by journalist Nicholas Kristof. He emphasized that the use of flame retardants in furniture was a result of the tobacco industry responding to concerns about cigarettes causing fires

in homes. However, he argued that flame retardants are actually dangerous because they act as an endocrine disruptor.

A few months later, environmental health scientist Dr. Arlene Blum challenged California's Technical Bulletin 117, which mandates that the foam found inside upholstered furniture be able to withstand exposure to a small flame for 12 seconds without igniting. This has led manufacturers adding flame retardants to the foam. Dr. Blum proposed that flame retardants are toxic chemicals and should be removed from furniture, an overture that led to California Gov. Jerry Brown directing the state's Department of Consumer Affairs to revise this Bulletin so that flame retardants will no longer be mandated in the production of furniture.

Media coverage

CBS News picked up on the most [recent story](#) [25] with their statistic of 84 percent of California couches containing harmful levels of flame retardants. They used words such as dangerous chemicals, hormone disruptors and carcinogens to further demonize flame retardants. *The New York Times* has also provided continuing coverage of this story throughout the year, first in the case of [Nicholas Kristof's article](#) [26] and then with the scare brought to the forefront by Dr. Arlene Blum. *The Chicago Tribune* [27] also reported the story.

The flame retardant story was also reported by [USA Today](#) [28], [ABC](#) [29] News, [Food Consumer](#) [30], [NPR News](#) [31] and the [Huffington Post](#) [32], with headlines such as Study Warns of Toxic Flame Retardants in Most Couches (ABC News), and The Flame Retardant Story the Chemical Industry Didn't Want You to Hear (Huffington Post), igniting fear in consumers.

ACSH perspective

Nowhere in the literature has it been shown that trace levels of chemicals, including flame retardants, have any impact on cancer rates. In ACSH's publication, "[Brominated Flame Retardants: A Burning Issue](#)" [33] we point out that flame retardants play a vitally important role in preventing or slowing fires by slowing ignition and rate of fire growth. The publication also discusses the vast body of research that has been done showing that exposure to flame retardants poses no health risks to individuals. The European Union analyzed 588 studies looking at flame retardants before making the decision to continue to allow them to be used in consumer products. Additionally, the World Health Organization, the National Academy of Sciences and the Consumer Product Safety Commission concluded that exposures to flame retardants did not pose any adverse health risks to the general population. These conclusions also apply to infants. The article concludes that there is no credible medical or scientific basis upon which to support a flame retardants ban. Studies have failed to demonstrate any health risks to the general population. Banning flame retardants, though, has the dire potential to increase the risk of death from fire and raise the number of associated injuries.

ACSH's Dr. Elizabeth Whelan says, The fact that people are worried they could get sick sitting on their couch shows that this is a psychiatric problem. This is irrational to the Nth degree. And ACSH's Dr. Gilbert Ross adds that this attack on flame retardants is merely an agenda-driven campaign

meant to scare consumers. He says that flame retardants have saved many lives, and to claim that they are endocrine disruptors is junk science at its finest.

Bottom line

Flame retardants are safe and there is no reason why they should be removed from consumer products, especially because they are critical in saving lives. The baseless hype, promoted by anti-chemical activists who ignore the science that clearly shows that flame retardants are safe, is simply propaganda. In his article, Kristof ends by saying that Your home is filled with toxic flame retardants that serve no higher purpose than enriching three [chemical manufacturing] companies. He is pitching the idea that individuals should be fearful of everything in their homes, without looking at the scientific facts. Before considering whether or not to get rid of your couch because of this scare, you should look at what the science says and you can rest assured that your couch is not a health hazard.

8. Greenpeace expose on toxins in designer clothing

The scare: Greenpeace International in Beijing claims that some of the world's best-known fashion retailers are selling contaminated clothing, containing materials that break down to form hormone-disrupting and cancer-causing chemicals when released into the environment. They claim that these chemicals were found in all clothing from jeans to underwear and in brands such as Armani, Benetton, Blazek, C&A, Calvin Klein, Diesel, Esprit, Gap, H&M, Jack & Jones, Levi's, Mango, Marks & Spencer, Metersbonwe, Tommy Hilfiger, Vancl, Vero Moda, Victoria's Secret and Zara. Greenpeace alleges that these chemicals are not only dangerous for those wearing the clothing, but also for those who live near the factories where the clothing is made.

Origin of the scare

Greenpeace International released an investigative report entitled Toxic Threads The Big Fashion Stitch-Up, detailing tests of 141 clothing items and purporting a link between textile manufacturing facilities using these hazardous chemicals and the presence of the chemicals in the final clothing product. Greenpeace is now demanding that all fashion brands reformat clothing so that there is no discharge of chemicals into the environment by 2020. Greenpeace is also urging the government to establish a list for hazardous chemicals and have that data publicly available.

Media coverage

The Huffington Post [reported](#) ^[34] the scare, going so far as to highlight the fashion companies who pledge to detox their clothing, specifically Zara, which plans to go toxic free by the year 2020. The scare was also covered by the [NY Daily News](#) ^[35].

Various environmental news sites, as well as blogs, picked up on the story, including the [Environment News Service](#) [36], [FashionUnited](#) [37], [generationgreen](#) [38] and the [Environmental Leader](#) [39]. These sites all highlighted the supposed dangers of toxins in clothing and urged consumers to take action against those brands highlighted in the Greenpeace report.

Other international news sites also reported the story, including the [Jerusalem Post](#) [40], [Taiwan News](#) [41], [EuroNews](#) [42], [Taipei Times](#) [43] and the [China Post](#) [44].

ACSH perspective

The chemicals in question are known as nonylphenol ethoxylates (NPEs), and are often used as detergents in various industries, including the textile industry. They are also used in soaps, degreasers, dry cleaning aids, indoor pesticides, cosmetics, paints and coatings, dust control agents, emulsifiers and adhesives, as well as in many other industrial, household and institutional applications. They are crucial to the technical efficacy and stability of these products. NPEs break down to form a compound known as nonylphenol (NPs), which is the chemical under attack. Although these compounds may be dangerous to aquatic life, there is little evidence for any significant detrimental effects of exposure to these compounds on human health. In fact, risk assessments conducted in the European Union, Canada and the United States conclude that typical exposure to NPs does not pose a risk to human health.

Recent studies looking at laboratory animals found that when ingested, NPs leave the body very quickly, resulting in no significant accumulation in the body. Furthermore, the levels of exposure to which the animals were subjected was at doses thousands of times higher than the highest levels to which humans are exposed. A new report from the U.N. International Program on Chemical Safety also concluded that the evidence pointing to the potential for NPs to have adverse effects on the endocrine system is weak, inconsistent and inconclusive.

Bottom line

When was the last time you heard about someone getting sick from wearing a pair of designer jeans? Your clothes are perfectly safe. You should not add toxins in your clothing to a list of things to worry about

9. Perfume components

Last June, the European Scientific Committee on Consumer Safety released a report on fragrance allergens that is, components of cosmetic products that can cause allergic reactions in some people. This report stated that up to 3 percent of Europeans have a contact allergy to fragrances. A person who has a contact allergy to a chemical will have a skin reaction such as a rash or hives when that chemical touches their skin.

The [committee has identified](#) [45] over 100 chemical compounds as being potentially allergenic when contacted by susceptible individuals. Although they have suggested simply limiting the concentration of many of these chemicals in cosmetics, the committee stated this fall that they

would like to pass an outright ban on two components tree moss and oak moss. These two compounds, however, provide the distinctive woody notes in several iconic perfumes Chanel No. 5, Miss Dior, and Shalimar, for example.

Media response

Media coverage of the proposed ban was wide-ranging. CBS News and Reuters both carried the story, as did online [Medical Daily](#) [46].

ACSH perspective

There is no question that some components of fragrances and other cosmetics may cause a contact dermatitis in susceptible individuals. The question is whether it is necessary or even advisable to ban such chemicals, or enforce some sort of legal stricture on their use. It would, of course, be important to do so if the reaction to these compounds was life-threatening or even seriously incapacitating. But neither of these outcomes is likely to occur.

Indeed, if we were to take such actions against allergens like these, would we then have to ban peanuts because a peanut allergy can be life threatening? Or shellfish?

Ironically, the more natural a compound, the more likely that an allergic reaction can be expected and both tree moss and oak moss are certainly natural i.e., not synthesized in a laboratory.

The bottom line

There is no need for action against these compounds either banning them or restricting their use. At most, widely allergenic chemicals could be labeled on products that contain them. It is reasonable to expect that reasonable people will avoid products that make them itch or give them a rash.

10. BPA and receipts

The scare: Bisphenol A (BPA), an industrial chemical that has been used since the 1960s, has long been demonized as having negative health effects on the brain, behavior and prostate gland of fetuses, infants and children. It has been used to harden certain plastics and resins and can be found in water bottles, baby bottles, cups, toys and other consumer goods, as well as in the coating used inside metal food containers in order to prevent spoilage and food-borne illness. Some research has indicated that BPA can seep into food or beverages from containers made with BPA and now apparently BPA can leach into your body from a store receipt.

Origin of the scare

A new law on Long Island called the Safer Sales Slip Act is banning certain store receipts because of the alleged concern over BPA. This follows in succession of a long list of producers that have been called upon to remove BPA from products, such as bottles and other baby products. This act

claims that banning the use of these receipts will eliminate one of the largest sources of exposure to BPA, especially for storeowners and those who work in retail.

Media coverage

New York's Fox 5 and WCBS 2 both covered the story and interviewed Dr. Ross, although he only appeared on the newscasts for a couple of seconds. The majority of the time spent on this story was dedicated to trying to convince the public that BPA is an endocrine disruptor linked to everything from breast cancer to infertility to heart disease.

The story was also covered by The Huffington Post, *The New York Times*, Science Daily, *USA Today* and the Environmental Working Group. All of these reports have an alarmist tone promoting the necessity of this legislation and the alleged dangers of exposure to BPA through cash register receipts. Furthermore, a petition was created at change.org, drawing attention to this scare, and demanding that store owners remove BPA from cash register receipts.

ACSH perspective: Numerous regulatory agencies around the world have concluded that BPA is safe, including the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, the European Food Safety Authority, the American Chemistry Council, Health Canada and Food Standards Australia New Zealand. According to Justin Teegarden, a toxicologist and senior research scientist at the Pacific Northwest National Research Lab in Washington, BPA poses no danger to humans because it is rapidly metabolized and excreted in the urine. A person would have to consume hundreds of thousands of times more than the amount they do now, in order to even measure significant levels in the blood. And in fact, the efforts to ban BPA from receipts to baby bottles are driven not by science, but by agenda-driven activists.

According to Dr. Gilbert Ross, the Safer Sales Slip Act is looking for trouble where none exists. He says, There is no evidence that BPA in consumer products of any type, including cash register receipts, are harmful to health. It's not making anything safer for anybody. It's a waste of energy, time and financial resources.

Bottom line

BPA is a safe chemical and should not be banned from being used in commercial products. Furthermore, few of these agenda-driven activists have looked into the chemicals that may be used to replace BPA in these products and whether these chemicals may pose health concerns. ACSH's Dr. Elizabeth Whelan adds, BPA has been used for decades with a proven safety record. These new chemicals, whatever they are, will not have been scrutinized as stringently as BPA.

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- [9] <http://www.nbclosangeles.com/news/local/Lipstick-Lead-FDA-Survey-Health-139339988.html>
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