

# Killer rice? Yes, but it has nothing to do with arsenic

By ACSH Staff — November 19, 2014



One of our primary missions at ACSH is to inform people about risk, in particular, about theoretical or minuscule risks vs. real ones.

Today's lesson in this is brought to you courtesy of Consumer Reports (CR), which seems to take delight in scaring people over nothing. This time it is an oldie but baddy arsenic in rice.

This is hardly the first time this issue has popped up. Back in 2011, the fountain of misinformation, Dr. Oz, scared mothers to death by maintaining that the apple juice they were feeding their kids was dangerous. [It wasn't](#) [1]. It still isn't.

Now it's rice. According to the report published by CR two years ago, the amount of arsenic in rice and rice products is actually more than they thought, and they called these findings worrisome. Based on this report, they are [now advising](#) [2] that children eat hot rice cereal and rice products no more than twice a month and children under five should limit rice drinks, rice cakes and ready-to-eat rice cereals.

But are the levels of arsenic found in rice really worrisome?

Arsenic is found naturally all over the world, especially in groundwater, as well as in dairy products, grains, meat and fish. It is impossible to avoid. We have previously [discussed](#) [3] geographical areas where the amount of arsenic in water is found in levels that are high enough to cause symptoms. This does not apply to our apple juice, or rice milk, which contain much less. So, at best, this is a minimal or even theoretical risk, yet it is all over the news.

What is *not* all over the news is that white rice indirectly kills and blinds millions of people, especially in poorer areas of Asia, where it is the main staple. But not because of arsenic.

Why? Since rice does not contain vitamin A, people who subsist mostly on this crop especially in Asia are susceptible to the [horrific effects](#) [4] of vitamin A deficiency. This is the *real* danger of white rice not what it contains, but what it doesn't.

Biotechnology has provided an elegant solution to this problem called golden rice. One would think that this might solve the problem. But in this insane world, it has not.

ACSH's Dr. Josh Bloom discusses this paradox. Golden rice is simply regular rice in which two genes have been inserted into the genome by using GM technology. This causes the rice to produce beta-carotene a precursor of vitamin A. Beta-carotene is yellow, thus the name.

So why is the world not embracing this technology? Idiocy, says Dr. Bloom. "There are groups Greenpeace perhaps being the worst that are anti-GM [you name it] for no good reason except I well, I can't think of one. This is what they do. They protest stuff.

Much of this is (big surprise) about money. The huge organic food industry funds activist anti-GM groups, such as the Environmental Working Group. Their job is to manipulate you so that you are against new technology. They do it very well.

Dr. Bloom concludes, Let's give a round of applause to groups that scare you about inconsequential amounts of arsenic in rice, but do everything in their power to prevent the use of a (free) technology that will save millions of children. I hope they sleep well at night.

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**Source URL:** <https://www.acsh.org/news/2014/11/19/killer-rice-yes-nothing-arsenic>

**Links**

[1] [http://www.nbcnews.com/id/44520025/ns/health-diet\\_and\\_nutrition/#.TnIo1M1HCCh](http://www.nbcnews.com/id/44520025/ns/health-diet_and_nutrition/#.TnIo1M1HCCh)

[2] <http://www.nbcmiami.com/news/local/Consumer-Reports-Arsenic-in-Rice-283104591.html>

[3] <http://acsh.org/2012/09/more-alarmist-junk-on-arsenic-this-time-rice/>

[4] <http://www.preservearticles.com/201105307243/9-important-symptoms-of-vitamin-a-deficiency.html>