

# Scientists Applaud Board of Education Decision: rBGH Milk is Safe for Schools

*By ACSH Staff — April 22, 1997*

Scientists and physicians at the American Council on Science and Health today applauded the decision of the New York City Board of Education not to ban milk from c that increases milk production.

As ACSH President Dr. Elizabeth Whelan has pointed out, rBGH occurs naturally in cows milk in very small quantities, and adding rBGH does not affect the quantity of rBGH found in the milk. Furthermore, public misunderstanding about the safety and benefits of rBGH is common: Many consumers do not receive factual information about biotechnology; and, even worse, many hear misinformation.

Thousands of scientific studies of rBGH have been reviewed by (among others) the US. Food and Drug Administration, the National Institute of Health, the American Medical Association, and the World Health Organization. The studies have concluded that rBGH does not adversely affect animal health and that it is safe for humans.

Despite the scientific evidence, however, several local school boards, a coalition of parents groups, and the New York Green Party have demanded that the Board of Education require dairies to submit written pledges not to sell milk from cows treated with rBGH to city schools.

On February 21, 1997, ACSH issued a press release in which it rejected the Green Partys claims as sweeping, alarming and scientifically insupportable. ACSH also urged City Councilman Tom Duane to oppose the proposed banning of rBGH milk from schools and city agencies.

And Board of Education spokesman David Golub responded, The FDA has given us assurances milk is safe if it contains this growth hormone. This is a nonissue. The Food and Drug Administration required evidence of rBGHs safety and efficacy before it would approve rBGH for commercial use. The agency granted that approval in November 1993.

Although rBGH does increase the amount of Insulin Growth Factor (IGF) in milk (IGF is a hormone linked to cancers, hypertension, and other disorders), this IGF does not pose a risk: It is a protein and as such is digested like all other dietary proteins. Any hormonal activity is destroyed as the IGF is digested.

Researchers have carried out hundreds of studies in which cows were injected with rBGH, and no link has ever been found between the hormone treatment and any health problems. The often-heard claims that rBGH increases the incidence of mastitis (inflammation of the udder) in cows are misleading: The small increase in mastitis is real, but it is due to the increase in milk yield, not to the rBGH.

Says Dr. Whelan, Milk from rBGH-treated cows is indistinguishable from milk from nontreated cows. Giving cows rBGH does not change the composition or wholesomeness of their milk in any way, and treatment does not affect the amount of rBGH found in the milk. Scientific studies have clearly shown the efficacy, safety, and benefits realized by integrating rBGH into dairy production. Cows injected with synthetic growth hormone (rBGH), a substance

---

COPYRIGHT © 1978-2016 BY THE AMERICAN COUNCIL ON SCIENCE AND HEALTH

---

**Source URL:** <https://www.acsh.org/news/1997/04/22/scientists-applaud-board-of-education-decision-rbgh-milk-is-safe-for-schools>