Friends of the Earth Claims Calcium is Dangerous for Babies

By Hank Campbell — May 17, 2016

An in-house study commissioned by the activist group Friends of the Earth unsurprisingly found exactly what the anti-science environmentalists hoped to find: nanoparticles of hydroxyapatite with a needle-like shape were in baby formula.

They have declared these unlabeled and essentially unregulated needles a cause for concern. What is hydroxyapatite? Calcium. And they say "needles" because it sounds scarier than "nanoparticles." If you are not aware, calcium is legally required in formula, and calcium-dense hydroxyapatite is produced in our bodies to make bones and teeth strong. It is also used to regulate acidity. Some people buy it as a dietary supplement.

But can calcium be hazardous to your health? Of course it can. Everything in your Thanksgiving dinner has carcinogens known to cause cancer in rats, that is why good scientists don't conflate hazard and risk (whereas the Environmental Defense Fund activist who has socially engineered the International Agency for Research on Cancer -- the U.N.'s IARC -- does just that), good scientists note that dose matters.

In this area, though, the issue can be a bit more complex. Size matters in particles, so calcium or something else in the form of nanoparticles will be discussed by experts without recognizing that anti-science groups are going to exploit this scientific "god of the gaps" later:

Journalist: "Can nanoparticles go through the gut wall and into the bloodstream?"
Scientist: "Sure, but that doesn't mean ..."

Environmental lawyer: "Well then you don't know it isn't mutating cells or endocrine disrupting our most vulnerable population!"

They can never be wrong because it's impossible to disprove a negative. No one can prove something can't harm an infant when it's digested, dissolved and/or reconstituted inside the body of a baby. Of course, they also can't prove I am not an alien from Venus. It's obviously flawed reasoning, yet common for environmental lawyers out to raise money promoting fear and doubt.

What else contains scary nanoparticles? **Chewing gum** [3].

That's right, they want you to worry that those tiny nanoparticles are also entering the food supply unregulated and untested everywhere. If you want it to stop, please send your credit card information to F.O.E. (DON'T DELAY, ACT NOW!) If you are nervous because scientific names are scary, you are the perfect donor for them.

**One of the reviewers** [4], Andrew Maynard, Director, Risk Innovation Lab, Arizona State University, is proud of his affiliation with Friends of the Earth and says he maintains independent status even though they commissioned the study. But you know who doesn't believe that? SourceWatch and US Right To Know (same people, really), Mother Jones, and plenty of other Deniers For Hire and media organizations who will seek to capitalize on this study.

But will SourceWatch list Friends of the Earth as a group that buys off scientists to produce predetermined results? No, they have yet to implicate any organization that matches their ideological, environmental or political beliefs. They raise all that dark money to undermine science, not to separate health scares from health threats the way the American Council on Science and Health does.

Friends of the Earth is sparing no faux outrage. **They quote Lisa Archer** [5], director of the Food & Technology Program at Friends of the Earth and herself a mother -- yes, FOE has a parent among their employees and note it prominently -- wants federal agencies to start banning this calcium.

“I am outraged that these poorly studied, virtually unregulated and unlabeled nanomaterials are present in infant formula when there are suitable non-nano ingredients that have been used for decades and don’t carry the same risks," she said. "The FDA must act immediately to put a moratorium on the use of nanomaterials in formula and other food until they can be proven safe, and are regulated and labeled. In the meantime, formula companies must immediately commit to not use these materials.”

If nano-calcium scares you also, FOE wants your money. But don't send nano-donations, they want the really big kind.

**NOTE:**

(1) They also found nano titanium dioxide (TiO2), and nano silicon dioxide (SiO2), so don't put sunscreen on your baby when you are at the beach. Actually, you can't even go to the beach because of that second one. Actual toxicologists, and not the public health academics writing these papers, are also slapping their foreheads with the liberal uses of the "nano" prefix these
folks are throwing around.

Formula tested was from Gerber (two), Enfamil, Similac (two), and Well Beginnings.