



Bayit Bytes for Your Health and the Earth

Plastics & Your Health

The Problem:

- Plastics may contain chemicals that mimic hormones and can therefore disrupt the human reproductive system. Human studies have shown that exposure to two of these, **phthalates** and **Bisphenol A or BPA** have been associated with increases in developmental disorders of the brain and nervous system like ADHD (*Mount Sinai Journal of Medicine, Vol.78, No.1*). There is growing evidence to support that exposure over time is associated with an increased risk of breast cancer, infertility, early puberty, obesity and diabetes in humans (*Breast Cancer, Endocrine Disruptors, and Early Puberty, CEHC Annual Symposium, November 30th, 2009*).
- **Phthalates** are used to make plastics flexible & they're also used in cosmetics and other personal care products including lotions and shampoos as part of the chemical make-up of fragrance.
- **BPA** is used to make polycarbonate plastic used in many drinking bottles. It's also used in the liner of metal cans to prevent rusting.
- **Phthalates** and **BPA** get into our food and drinks when they leach out of plastics. Heating increases the amount of leaching.
- People absorb **BPA** through their skin by handling coated paper products like cash register receipts (*Healthy Child Healthy World 10/10/11*).

What You Can Do:

Reduce Your Exposure to Phthalates & BPA:

- When microwaving food & beverages use ceramic or glass containers & avoid foods that have been baked in plastic;
- Use paper towel or unbleached waxed or parchment paper instead of plastic cling wrap when microwaving;
- Clean crock pots by simmering hot water & baking soda or vinegar in them instead of using plastic liners;
- Wash plastics by hand, not in the dishwasher;
- Don't use warm or hot liquids in hard plastic containers like water bottles, baby bottles, sippy cups;
- Use safer alternatives for food storage like glass, ceramic & stainless steel;
- Whenever possible buy fresh food & use frozen foods or foods sold in "Tetra-paks" instead of canned foods (Eden foods is using BPA-free cans for their products);
- Look for cleaning & personal care products that say "phthalate-free" or "BPA-free" or "fragrance-free" (essential oils can be a less toxic alternative to chemical fragrance made with plasticizers);
- Wash hands after handling cash register receipts & keep receipts separate;
- Use safer plastics. The number on the bottom of most plastic containers gives you information about the kind of plastic used in the product. Dr. Phil Landrigan from the Children's Environmental Health Center (CEHC), a nationally recognized expert on environmental health in children, coined the phrase "*5,4,1,2 all the rest are bad for you*". Take this card with you when you shop to remind you which are the safer plastics. 1,2,4 & 5 are safer; Less safe are 3 (PVC or vinyl which you can often recognize by its strong smell; think of a new plastic shower curtain),6 (polystyrene foam you'll recognize as styrofoam),7(the symbol for other plastics including polycarbonate; think of the big water cooler jugs)



Reduce Your Use

- Try to cut down on the amount of plastic you buy.
- Buy in bulk whenever possible to reduce packaging.
- Bring your own stainless steel mug to your favorite coffee shop.
- Bring reusable bags for shopping (www.Reusablebags.com).

- Explore plastic-free containers for packing lunches (<http://www.reuseit.com>; www.lifewithoutplastic.com).
- Sign up for advocacy alerts from organizations supporting environmentally friendly measures & those concerned about environmental health like www.cehcenter.org; <http://www.thegreenguide.com>; http://kidshealth.org/parent/growth/learning/safe_toys.html; www.ewg.org; healthychild.org; www.ribbet.org; www.saferchemicals.org

Please view the attachments for additional information on plastics.