



Use Plastics Wisely

Baby Bottles, Sippy Cups, and Food Containers and more

Getting ready for your new arrival brings lots of celebration and a wonderful excuse to have a party or as we like to refer to them as baby showers at least in the US. Everyone will ask you if you have registered and if so where? The websites are very helpful to make suggestions for things you will “need”. What do you choose when it comes to feeding your baby? Not just if you will breast-feed or use formula, but what will you feed your baby from? There are hundreds of choices when it comes to baby bottles and you can purchase them almost anywhere including the local grocery store or gas station. But have you considered what they are made from?

Seriously, 95% of plastic baby bottles contain Bisphenol-A (BPA), a developmental, neural, and reproductive toxicant that mimics estrogen and can interfere with healthy growth and body function. Animal studies demonstrate that the chemical causes damage to reproductive, neurological and immune systems during critical stages of development, such as infancy and in the womb. The levels sufficient to cause harm in animals are beneath the average levels reported in people living throughout the developed world. The chemical is now utilized in hard, polycarbonate plastics, as well as the epoxy resins used in the linings of some food and beverage containers, dental sealants and numerous other consumer products. Some of the organic baby foods currently on the market are packaged in containers that contain BPA.....amazing. The leaching can happen in any product that contains BPA but it happens more easily when bottles are heated, become scratched, or cloudy. Food items, with a high fat content, stored in containers made with BPA have been found to absorb significantly higher levels of BPA from the containers.

The FDA has yet to take a firm stand on the issue of BPA. Canada has banned the use of BPA.

The pacifier and teether you choose are important as well. Many of these are made of polyvinyl chloride or PVC which often contain toxic additives such as phthalates and lead, not to mention the toxic process used to create the PVC. These pacifiers are typically of a yellowish color or cloudy. Then there are the toys, the plastic toys. There has been so much controversy over the plastics in children's toys because many contain lead from PVC.

There are so many types of plastics. **So what should you do?**

When it comes to bottles, sippy cups, and food containers consider using glass or polypropylene bottles (#5 plastic) instead of polycarbonate (hard, shiny, clear or tinted plastic, usually with a number 7 or “PC” on the bottom/underside) bottles or sippy cups.

If you continue to use polycarbonate bottles (#7 plastic), do not use harsh detergents or put bottles in the dishwasher. Instead, clean them with warm soapy water and a sponge. Scouring brushes can scratch the surface of the bottles and increase leaching rates. When the bottles become cloudy or scratched, throw them away. Do not heat food or milk in a polycarbonate bottle or container as this increases leaching.

Avoid use of infant formula brands in cans that use BPA as an epoxy liner. These tend to be liquids but check the list. <http://www.ewg.org/reports/infantformula>

Minimize or avoid canned food. The lining in most canned foods contains BPA. If the fat content is high it is even worse.

Be informed. Safer choices of plastics are plastics that use polyethylene (#1, #2, and #4) and polypropylene (#5), which require the use of less toxic additives. They also are non-chlorinated.





Avoid choosing products that use polyvinyl chloride (#3), polystyrene (#6), and polycarbonate (#7) which often are found in baby bottles or sippy cups. #7 plastics are a miscellaneous group of plastics so it is the category that polycarbonates fall into but not all #7 plastics contain polycarbonates. How do you tell? Not so easy. You will have to do a lot of detective work and call the manufacturer. Then be very persistent or you could avoid #7 plastics.



For heating food, glass and lead free ceramics are still a great choice.

Choose PVC-free pacifiers and teethers. Silicone pacifiers are available; many companies have stopped using PVC for teethers.

When it comes to toys, look for labels that read PVC, phthalate, and lead-free. Look for toys made with materials like organic cotton and sustainably harvested wood that use lead-free paints. The Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act was passed by the US Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) and changed the industry and its use of lead and certain phthalate. While the legislation is confusing it is a huge step in the right direction in limiting lead and phthalates in children's toys, clothing, bedding, etc. There will be more changes through 2009 so check the CPSC website for specifics.

Information is your best weapon for protecting your baby. Natural is your best choice.

Resources:

Vandenberg, L.N. 2007. Human exposure to bisphenol A. *Reproductive Toxicology* 24:139-177

<http://www.besafenet.com/pvc/about.htm>

http://www.chej.org/BPA_Website.htm

http://www.epa.gov/aging/press/othernews/2008/2008_0903_ons_2.htm

<http://www.ewg.org/reports/infantformula>

<http://www.cpsc.gov/about/cpsia/cpsia.html>

Safer Baby Bottles:

<http://www.newbornfree.com>

<http://thinkbabybottles.com>

<http://gobabylife.com>