

New BPA-free cans hitting shelves

Eco Logic by Jessica Ross

October 28, 2010

Safer canned food is on the way.

Good news for fans of canned foods, drinks, beer and all other things accessible via can opener and pull tab: manufacturers are beginning to make cans with linings free of bisphenol-A (BPA). According to a [evaluation](#) of companies' performance on addressing the problem of BPA in packaging, produced by Green Century Capital Management (Green Century), **Hain Celestial, H.J. Heinz, ConAgra and General Mills have begun using BPA-free cans for some of their product lines.**



The Canadian government has [officially noted BPA as a toxic substance under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act](#). It's an estrogen mimic that's commonly used in the epoxy that's used to line cans to protect us from the metal and extend product shelf life. It's also used in higher levels on [thermal-print receipts](#).

Exposure to BPA is a health issue. But it's also an environmental issue, as BPA accumulates in the biosphere. The [Canadian Government order states](#), "On the basis of expected continued or increasing exposure of biota, and information indicating the potential for long-term adverse effects to organisms within the range of concentrations currently measured in the environment, it is considered appropriate to apply a precautionary approach when characterizing ecological risk. Therefore, it was concluded that bisphenol A is entering the environment in a quantity or concentration or under conditions that have or may have an immediate or long-term harmful effect on the environment or its biological diversity."

Major manufacturers **phased out plastic water bottles** made of polycarbonate, a plastic that can contain BPA, over a year ago, and the Canadian government banned polycarbonate baby bottles made with BPA in 2008. But BPA still lurks in most can linings. While the exposure we would get from drinking one can of pop or eating one can of soup is miniscule, and we appear to eliminate the BPA quickly, **it's detectable in Canadians' urine.** [Research recently released](#) by Statistics Canada's Canadian Health Measures Survey shows that "Canadians aged 6 to 79 had a geometric mean concentration of urinary BPA of 1.16 micrograms per litre. Concentrations of BPA in urine based on volume were higher for children aged 6 to 11 than they were for adults aged 40 to 79. Moreover, the highest concentrations were measured in teens aged 12 to 19."

Why does this matter? While studies to date have focused on BPA in animals, it's clear that the substance is an estrogen mimic, and is linked to reproductive health and fertility issues, particularly due to exposure prenatally and in the first years of life, as well as [increased risk for breast cancer](#), among other health concerns. Today, there's [new evidence](#) that BPA exposure can reduce sperm quality.

Canada has been ahead of the curve in banning BPA in some products and in listing the substance as a toxin. **Do you think the government should ban BPA altogether?**