



Major Producers to Ditch BPA From Packaging

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Some of the world's biggest food companies are removing the chemical Bisphenol A from packaging, amid growing concern it is causing a wide range of human illnesses including heart disease and breast cancer.

Nestlé, the world's biggest food manufacturer, says it will stop putting Bisphenol A (also known as BPA) into US products within three years, while tinned giant Heinz is at "an advanced stage" in removing it from UK baby food, and is funding research by one of the chemical's leading critics. General Mills, the US giant behind the Green Giant tinned brand, has already ditched BPA from its Muir Glen tomato range, while Campbell Soups says it has done "hundreds" of tests exploring alternatives. Several other firms, such as Coca-Cola, have declined to disclose a timetable for its withdrawal, saying that BPA is safe.

BPA toughens the packaging of many tins, glass jars and plastic bottles, and the casings of electronics gadgets such as TVs, mobile phones and laptop computers.

Dozens of scientists say it is an endocrine disruptor that affects hormones and could be causing breast and prostate cancer, heart disease, brain retardation, impotence and infertility.

While the US says it has "some concern" about the chemical's potential effects on the brain, on behaviour and on the prostate glands of foetuses, babies and young children, the European Food Safety Agency recent reiterated its view that the substance does not pose a risk to the public.

In a survey for a new report, **Seeking Safer Packaging**, the US investment fund Green Century Capital Management surveyed 26 food companies for their policy on BPA. Half said they were committed to ending use of the substance, double the 23 per cent found last year.

Emily Stone, of Green Century Capital Management, said: "Companies are actually moving faster than regulators in phasing out BPA from food and beverage packaging." Some firms, such as Del Monte and Hain Celestial, have begun warning investors of a potential risk from tougher regulation of BPA use.

However it is possible that UK subsidiaries of some firms may take weaker action in Europe than in the US – where consumer awareness is much higher. While saying it was phasing out BPA in baby food, Nestlé told The Independent: "As a global food manufacturer and marketer, Nestlé takes into consideration local needs, cultural differences and consumer preferences as well as attitudes concerning the use of certain materials. This may well result in different solutions in various regions of the world..."

More than 20 US states have introduced legislation to restrict BPA use, Canada has listed it as a toxic chemical and several European countries have refused to accept the European Food Safety Agency's latest position, released on 30 September.

Scientists are divided. While many endocrinologists, experts in hormones, believe low doses of BPA can harm humans, general toxicologists say evidence from large industry-funded studies suggests this is not the case.

Henrik Høegh, food minister in Denmark, which has banned BPA in products for children up to three years old,

said: "Our ban is based on a study which, according to Danish experts, shows uncertainty about the effects of even small doses of Bisphenol A on the learning ability in young rats."

Where BPA is Used

* Tinned Food

BPA resin sprayed on the inside of tins prevents metal from contaminating food. The Independent found this year that BPA was present in 18 of the UK's best-selling tins, including Heinz baked beans, Princes sardines, right, and Napolina tomatoes.

* Drinks cans

Some fizzy drinks, including Coca-Cola, are lined with a BPA resin. Pepsi has not said if its cans are lined with BPA.

* Glass jars

Some glass jars have BPA in the lid. Campaigners want firms such as Nestlé and Heinz to remove BPA from their baby and toddler food ranges because of fears over its impact on babies.

* Electronics

BPA is in the casings of electronics products including CDs, and DVDs, phones, TVs, laptops, personal computers, printers, cameras, shavers, hairdryers, irons, food mixers, microwaves and kettles.

* Plastic bottles

BPA is found in polycarbonate bottles designed to carry water or baby milk. Several manufacturers such as Tommee Tippee have phased out BPA.

* Sports equipment

Sports helmets, ski goggles, binocular housings and golf and tennis equipment contain the chemical.

* Till receipts

BPA is used to make ink visible on thermal till receipts. Concern arises about shoppers handling the paper and then touching their mouths or food.

* Medical equipment

BPA is found in the casings of dialysis machines, dentists' operating lamps and blood sample reservoirs. It also toughens the lenses of spectacles.

Going BPA-free...

Heinz

"Heinz remains committed to moving to alternatives. Our plastic Heinz Beanz Snap Pots and Heinz Beanz Fridge Pack contain no BPA. All Heinz plastic baby food and juice containers, as well as packaging for our snacks and cereals, are BPA-free.

"Our baby food cans also contain no BPA and we are already at an advanced stage of phasing out the minute amounts of BPA used in the lids of jarred baby foods to ensure seal integrity, even though the BPA is coated and does not come into direct contact with the food at any time.

"Heinz continues to advance research into alternative coatings in response to consumer opinion but safety remains our first priority before making any changes."

...and sticking with it

Coca-Cola

"The consensus repeatedly stated among regulatory agencies is that current levels of exposure to BPA through food and beverage packaging do not pose a health risk to the general population. BPA is found in the linings of our alumin-

um cans. Our bottled water and plastic soft drink containers are made from polyethylene terephthalate (PET) plastic, which does not contain BPA.

“While we are confident about the safety of our aluminium cans, we are always looking for ways to improve our packaging. We are working closely with several suppliers who are seeking alternatives. Any new material ... also would have to meet our safety, quality and functional requirements.”