

## Why Coca-Cola Isn't Ditching BPA

BY [Ariel Schwartz](#) Thu Apr 28, 2011

[BPA](#), an estrogen-mimicking chemical found in food and drink can linings, adhesives, and many plastics, has been repeatedly linked to breast cancer, early puberty, infertility, and other health problems. The stuff is really bad for you. And yet Coca-Cola, a company that sells more cans than almost anyone else, refuses to think about removing BPA from its linings. Now there's one more thing to worry about when you drink that delicious chemical-filled sludge known as Coke (yes, we're guilty, too).

A recent Coca-Cola shareholder resolution to remove BPA from can linings was approved by 26% (one in four) shareholders. [As You Sow](#), a nonprofit shareholder advocacy group, claims that a 10% vote is usually enough to spur a company to action. Coke's response? The Vancouver Sun [reports](#):

Muhtar Kent, chairman and chief executive officer of The Coca-Cola Company, told shareholders that the science just isn't there to justify a shift away from BPA, saying if the company had any doubt "about the safety of our packaging, we would not continue to use it. It's that simple." Kent said that this doesn't mean the company isn't exploring alternatives, but emphasized the beverage giant isn't in the packaging business and takes its direction from regulatory agencies.



What's the science? Well, a recent study concluding that BPA is safe was recently [discovered](#) to have been written by researchers with strong ties to the chemical industry. You might think that a company that produces such feel-good products as [Honest Tea](#) and [FUZE Healthy Infusions](#) would at least consider the slew of not bought-and-paid-for BPA [studies](#) that have been released in recent years (and the fact that the substance has been banned in baby bottles in Europe, Canada, and even China, where the toothpaste can kill you)--but that doesn't seem to be happening.

"I think they just feel they would be too vulnerable if they admit there might be a problem," says Michael Passoff, Senior Strategist at [As You Sow](#). "They feel they have to defend this product no matter what, where other companies we're seeing recognize the risk. Coke is the only [company we talk to] that just says there is no risk whatsoever, the science you're reading is wrong." According to Passoff, companies that are paying attention to potential BPA hazards include [Heinz](#), General Mills, and Hains Celestial, which are all launching [BPA-free product lines](#).

It's possible that Coca-Cola has asserted its position on BPA so many times that it's fearful of what will happen if it reverses. And it's true, basically admitting they've been poisoning us all these years might not go over so well. But that still won't make it any less true.

The thing is, Coke may be making a bad financial decision even if it genuinely believes that it is correct and BPA is safe. "As investors, that's our concern--that Coke is not prepared for market change, that Coke is just ignoring growing scientific concern, regulatory action, and consumer backlash," says Passoff. If BPA regulations are eventually passed in the U.S., Coke shareholders should hope that the company's scientists--or its can manufacturer's scientists--have secretly been slaving away at finding a decent alternative to its BPA-lined cans. Because if they haven't, everyone's favorite canned caffeine vendor (RIP [Four Loko](#)) will have to scramble pretty fast.