

Taco Bell, Other Fast Food Chains Ditch BPA Laced Paper Receipts

Leon Kaye | May 17, 2011



Your itemized receipt, BPA-free

While the long term human health impacts of bisphenol A (BPA) are still not entirely understood, more medical research suggests that the chemical wreaks havoc with humans' endocrine and nervous systems. Nevertheless, few government health agencies have banned or regulated BPA, and companies like Coca-Cola continue to use the chemical in beverage can liners. Despite a shareholder resolution that received the support from 26% of Coca-Cola's shareholders, Coca-Cola and other food and beverage companies insist on using BPA because of its ability to prevent contamination while extending the shelf life of canned products.

BPA is also in thermal paper, which ends up as cash register receipts, and even in dollar bills.

Industry use of BPA, however, may be on its decline. Yum! Brands, the fast food giant with a portfolio that includes Taco Bell, KFC, and Pizza Hut, announced that it will transition away from using receipt paper laden with BPA. Yum! was already in the process of changing towards a BPA-free receipt paper when the advocacy group **As You Sow** notified the company about its plan to submit a shareholder resolution urging the company to cease use of paper containing BPA. **As You Sow** promptly withdrew the resolution, which would have been submitted for a vote on Yum!'s annual proxy statement.

Yum! is following in the steps of other companies that have either switched to BPA-free paper or have avoided the chemical all along. Kroger, the USA's largest supermarket chain, announced last week it will change to using receipt paper free of BPA. Whole Foods stopped using such receipt paper as of last year. The news should be a relief for supermarket employees, as a Harvard study of pregnant women suggested that cashiers are at high risk of BPA exposure.

So how do you know whether your purse or wallet is full of BPA due to those pesky receipts? Appleton, a large paper manufacturer, eliminated BPA from its thermal paper several years ago, and last November began to embed red rayon fibers into its paper stock, so consumers can look for the red fibers to know the paper is BPA free. Consumers otherwise have little recourse but to research on their own as BPA, at least in the United States, is not yet regulated: only a few states ban the chemical from children's products.

The debate over BPA is hardly over, as some have suggested the elimination of BPA from a product only opens to the door to other harmful chemicals. One option is for consumers to accept electronic receipts: allEtronic is one firm that works with retailers to allow consumers to obtain receipts electronically. But soon, you can at least lick your fingers at KFC knowing that you are now only sopping up eleven herbs and spices and not BPA.