

FDA Bans BPA in Baby Bottles

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July 17, 2012 -- The FDA today banned the use of BPA in baby bottles and in sippy cups.

It's a matter of closing the barn door after the horses have gone: All baby bottles and sippy cups sold in the U.S. are now BPA-free.

Because manufacturers have "abandoned" BPA additives in these products, the FDA says there's no longer any need for FDA regulations permitting such use.

The FDA action comes in response to a petition by the American Chemistry Council, which opposes efforts to limit the use of BPA. By acting on the ACC petition, the FDA avoids having to rule on the controversial safety issues surrounding the widespread use of BPA.

"Separately from this petition, the FDA is actively assessing the safety of BPA," the agency says in its official notification of the new BPA rule.

That doesn't reassure consumer groups, such as the Natural Resources Defense Council, which have long fought for a ban on the chemical.

"This is only a baby step in the fight to eradicate BPA," Sarah Janssen, MD, PhD, NRDC senior scientist, said in a news release. "This half-hearted action -- taken only after consumers shifted away from BPA in children's products -- is inadequate. FDA continues to dodge the bigger questions of BPA's safety."

Last March, the FDA finally rejected the NRDC's petition to ban BPA from all consumer products.

Although some manufacturers have moved away from such use, BPA is a common ingredient in the plastic used to coat the inside of food cans. Makers of infant formula have largely stopped using cans containing BPA.

In a separate announcement, the FDA proposes a ban on BPA in infant formula cans -- not for safety reasons, but because manufacturers have abandoned such use. A petition requesting this ban came from Rep. Edward J. Markey of Massachusetts.

BPA is used to make a hard, clear plastic called polycarbonate or PC. PC is everywhere -- even in toilet paper and in U.S. cash.

In large enough doses, BPA is toxic. But it's not clear whether PC products expose people to harmful amounts of BPA.

Animal studies show that BPA can cause cancer. Human studies link high blood levels of BPA to obesity, thyroid problems, reproductive abnormalities, heart disease, childhood behavior problems, and neurologic disorders in humans. These studies only suggest a possible problem -- they do not prove that BPA actually causes any of these harms. Although several organizations, including the AAP, warn against using BPA products, BPA has not been proven to cause any human disease or condition.

SOURCES:

Federal Register, July 17, 2012.

News release, Natural Resources Defense Council.

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