

## FOOD PACKAGING PLASTIC HARMS BABIES AND CHILDREN

### MEDIA RELEASE

Attn: Chief of Staff

For immediate release: 21 January 2010

The National Toxics Network (NTN) is today renewing calls for the Australian Government to protect public health and ban the use of the controversial plasticizer, Bisphenol A (BPA) following a turnaround by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) which now has serious concerns about the health effects of BPA exposure, especially to babies and children.

‘The US FDA has this month revised its assessment of BPA based on new testing methods which can detect subtle effects of chemicals. Along with the National Institutes of Health, the FDA now acknowledge there are serious concerns with respect to developmental and reproductive impacts in infants and children exposed to BPA,’ says Dr Mariann Lloyd Smith.

‘BPA is an industrial chemical which has been used extensively since the 1960s in plastic food and beverage containers and in children’s products like shatter-proof baby bottles and the epoxy linings of canned foods. It leaches out of products and we all get exposed to it,’ says Dr Lloyd Smith.

The new studies the FDA looked at have also confirmed earlier findings in 2008 that showed the more BPA measured in peoples urine, the higher their rates of heart disease and diabetes. The research also found a link between abnormal liver enzymes in people with high BPA levels, suggesting the chemical alters liver functions.

In 2007, 38 independent international scientists funded by the National Institutes of Health and the US Environmental Protection Agency, reviewed 700 studies on BPA. They concluded that people are exposed to levels of BPA exceeding those that harm lab animals and noted that infants and fetuses are the most vulnerable.

The published findings also concluded that low doses of BPA during pregnancy can have profound effects on fetal prostate, breast, testicle, mammary glands and brain development in animals.

‘BPA is a known endocrine (hormone) disruptor that can do damage at very low levels of exposure. That alone is cause enough for regulators to act to remove it from products,’ Dr Lloyd Smith.

Previous studies also linked prenatal exposure to BPA with increased risk of cancer, significant increase in cell tumors of the testes, alteration to the number of chromosomes, uterine damage and obesity.

Meanwhile, comments by Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) that levels of BPA exposure are very low and aren't a significant health risk, do not reflect the current scientific consensus and are not in the public's best interest, says Dr Lloyd Smith.

FSANZ also claim the problem of BPA contaminating baby bottles is not their problem, rather the responsibility of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission. It appears no regulatory agency in Australia is looking after the health of Australians.

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US FDA Update on Bisphenol A (BPA) for Use in Food: January 2010  
<http://www.fda.gov/NewsEvents/PublicHealthFocus/ucm064437.htm>

*Bisphenol A: Expert Panel Consensus Statement: Integration of mechanisms, effects in animals and potential impact to human health at current exposure levels. Reproductive Toxicology (2007) 24:131-138.*