



There has been much controversy recently regarding the safety of polycarbonate plastic containers containing BPA (bisphenol A), a chemical which helps form the strong bond of these tough, clear plastic containers. BPA is one of many man-made chemicals classified as endocrine disruptors (which alter the function of the endocrine system by mimicking the role of the body's natural hormones) and has been used for years in a wide variety of plastics including everything from bicycle helmets to dental sealants. The scientific community is divided over the safety of BPA in polycarbonate containers. According to Wade Welshon, associate professor and BPA researcher at the University of Missouri, the effects of BPA on animals include "increased body weight, early puberty and increases in hormone dependent cancers." Other studies suggest a possible connection with behavior and neurological problems in children and chromosomal damage leading to birth defects (when exposed to pregnant women). A recent report by the National Toxicology Program of the National Institutes of Health found that humans are exposed to up to "1,000 times higher levels of BPA than the levels that cause adverse reactions in animals." However, the American Chemistry Council points to a 50 year safety track record for BPA and contends that the chemical is safe based on "thousands of studies from around the world." Without conclusive evidence, Advanced Pediatrics recommends the following common sense approach to plastic safety:

How can parents protect their children from "potential" risks associated with BPA?

- Don't microwave - some studies suggest exposure to high heat can dramatically increase leaching of BPA into liquid contents.
- Don't wash in dishwasher or extremely hot water (a concern for sterilization of baby bottles).
- Don't fill with hot drinks (including formula) or boiling water.
- Avoid leaving water bottles in the hot sun.
- Don't clean with bleaches or harsh detergents, which may cause the plastic bond to break down leaching BPA into liquid contents.
- Avoid filling with fatty foods or acidic drinks (may also cause plastic bond to break down).
- Discard products with visible wear (scratches, cracks, opaque tint).
- Don't reuse single use plastic products (like water bottles and plastic ware).
- Don't use plastic wrap in the microwave.
- *While these precautions are especially important for polycarbonate plastics containing BPA, they are also recommended for BPA alternative plastics.*

Most retailers are now selling BPA alternative plastic baby bottles, sippy cups and water bottles. Look for labels that say "BPA Free".