

How could canned foods be dangerous to our health if our grandparents have done it for years? First of all home canning is a good thing! Store bought canning is a whole other story. What you may not know is that there is a toxic chemical used to line the inside of tin and aluminum drink and food cans. It is called Bisphenol A (BPA) and is a plastic and resin ingredient that is used as a main building block for polycarbonate (PC) plastics. Bisphenol A has been linked to many health risks including neurological effects, heightened risk of breast and prostate cancers, diabetes, reproductive abnormalities, heart disease and other serious health problems. Not something you want to be ingesting, right? Especially since there are hundreds of studies proving that this toxic chemical leaches from the linings of the cans into the foods and hence into your body.

In a Consumer Reports published in December of 2009 it was revealed that many leading brands of canned foods contain BPA. Consumer Reports tested 19 name brand canned foods. The results were quite alarming. Nearly all of the tested canned foods were contaminated with the endocrine disrupting chemical BPA, this included organic canned foods as well. Yes, endocrine disrupting because this chemical mimics the hormone estrogen. According to their estimates, just a couple of servings of canned food can exceed the safety limits for daily BPA exposure for children.

In March of 2007 the EWG (Environmental Working Group) published an independent laboratory test that found BPA in over half of 97 name-brand cans of fruit, vegetables, soda, soups, and other commonly eaten canned foods. According to their tests just one to three servings of these foods could expose women and children to BPA levels that caused serious adverse effects in animal tests.

As of December 2004, 94 of 115 peer-reviewed studies had confirmed BPA's toxicity at low levels of exposure. According to Washington State University reproductive scientist Patricia Hunt, "Exposure to low levels of BPA – levels that we think are in the realm of current human exposure can profoundly affect both developing eggs and sperm." At the very lowest doses the chemical caused permanent alterations of prostate and breast cells that precede cancer, insulin resistance (main trait of Type II Diabetes), and chromosomal damage linked to recurrent miscarriage and a wide range of birth defects including Down's syndrome. These results were documented by Frederick Vom Saal, an endocrinologist at the University of Missouri who studies BPA. Von Saal was quoted saying, "I won't go near canned tomatoes." Few chemicals have been found to consistently display such a diverse range of harm at such low doses.

Consumer safety advocates have called on the FDA to ban the use of BPA in all food and beverage packaging. Of course, the industry is fighting back. They dismissed Consumer Reports findings and stated, "The use of bisphenol A (BPA) in can linings is both safe and vital for food protection." Despite its ubiquity and toxicity, BPA remains entirely without safety standards from the government. It is allowed in unlimited amounts in consumer products, drinking water, and food, the top exposure for most people. It is so common in products and industrial waste that it pollutes not only people but also rivers, sediment, estuaries, house dust, water, and even air nearly everywhere it is tested. I believe the dangers of canned foods far outweighs the convenience of buying them. By the way, there are a few brands that you can buy that do NOT line their cans with BPA. These brands include Eden Brand Foods (their beans and rice only), Trader Joes, Native Forest Coconut Milk, and Wild Planet Canned Tuna. I hope you will think twice when reaching for store bought cans!!

