



Food is major source of exposure to bisphenol A

9 November 2010 | GENEVA/ROME -- An international panel of experts concluded that food is by far the main source of bisphenol A (BPA) exposure and that other sources are of minor relevance, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) said today. BPA is migrating from food packaging, such as plastic containers (including baby bottles) and coated food cans, into the food. Other less important sources of BPA are house dust, soil or toys, dental treatments and thermal papers (e.g. cash register receipts).

The experts came to this conclusion after reviewing all the latest scientific evidence on the chemical and its potential to affect human health. They were able to link human studies that measure BPA levels in urine with estimates of BPA dietary intakes from food consumption surveys, and found that the results were in agreement. The experts were also able to model circulating levels of BPA in the human body, which are very low, indicating that BPA is not accumulated in the body and is rapidly eliminated through urine.

A few recent experimental and epidemiological studies found associations between low BPA exposure levels and some adverse health outcomes. The meeting concluded that, at this stage, it is difficult to interpret the relevance of these studies in the light of current knowledge of this compound. Until these associations can be confirmed, initiation of public health measures would be premature. However, as Angelika Tritscher, WHO toxicologist, noted at the closing of the expert meeting, action is already underway. "These are important conclusions that will help to direct further research. Several important studies are already in progress that will help to clarify the extent of human health impact of this chemical", said Dr Tritscher.

Over 30 experts attended the meeting to review toxicological and health aspects of BPA. This meeting was organized by WHO jointly with FAO, with the support of the European Food Safety Authority, Health Canada, the US National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences and the US Food and Drug Administration.

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