

news release from Environmental Defence

Bisphenol A is "Toxic": Canadian Government
Federal government decision will set international precedent

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Ottawa- In a precedent-setting move, the government of Canada today proposed that a chemical commonly found in plastic baby bottles, reusable water bottles and the lining of some food cans should be classified as "toxic" under Canadian law. Canada is the first jurisdiction in the world to consider designating the chemical, bisphenol A, as hazardous to human health and the environment.

"Listing bisphenol A as toxic is a tremendous step towards protecting Canadians from this harmful chemical and we congratulate the Prime Minister and Ministers Clement and Baird for this decision," said Dr. Rick Smith, Executive Director, Environmental Defence. "This conclusion really marks the beginning of the end for this chemical."

Bisphenol A is found in hard plastic baby bottles and sippy cups, as well as the lining of some food cans. International organizations, expert panels and more than 150 peer-reviewed studies have associated bisphenol A with a variety of health problems (obesity, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, breast cancer and a wide range of developmental problems), often at surprisingly low levels of exposure.

Since 2005, Environmental Defence has been testing the bodies of Canadians for measurable levels of pollutants as part of its Toxic Nation campaign. The testing of Ontario political leaders - Premier Dalton McGuinty, Progressive Conservative Leader John Tory and NDP Leader Howard Hampton - was the first study to reveal bisphenol A in the bodies of Canadians, though US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention testing has discovered bisphenol A at measurable levels in almost 95% of Americans. A further Toxic Nation study released in February found worrisome levels of bisphenol A leaching from polycarbonate plastic baby bottles sold in Canadian stores. Following this report, many parents stopped using polycarbonate bottles and have opted for non-toxic alternatives.

The Canadian government does not restrict the use of bisphenol A in consumer products but in May 2007, Health Canada added bisphenol A to a list of 200 substances to be reviewed under the Chemicals Management Plan. The plan required data on the health and environmental effects of bisphenol A to be carefully reviewed by both government scientists and the Chemicals Management Plan Challenge Advisory Panel - an independent panel of experts.

Today's decision puts Canada ahead internationally as the first country to place bisphenol A on a regulatory track. The government is now expected to propose specific regulatory measures. A growing list of retailers in Canada has already decided to remove products with bisphenol A from their store shelves: Mountain Equipment Co-op, Lululemon, Shoppers Drug Mart, Home Depot Canada, Sears Canada, Rexall Pharmacies, London Drugs, Wal-Mart Canada, Canadian Tire, Forzani Group Ltd., and Hudson's Bay Company.

"The writing is on the wall for this chemical," said Smith. "More retailers should get ahead of the curve and follow the lead of companies that have already stopped selling products containing this toxic ingredient."

Environmental Defence's two-year long campaign to ban bisphenol A in food and beverage containers will continue to ensure the government announcement translates into real change and protection for Canadians.

Detailed information about bisphenol A, including the report Toxic Baby Bottles in Canada: Bisphenol A Leaching from Popular Brands of Polycarbonate Baby Bottles, is available on Environmental Defence's web site at www.environmentaldefence.ca.

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