

BPA seeping into beverages a health concern

By Anahad O'Connor, New York Times

People who regularly drink from cans and plastic bottles may want to reconsider: A study shows that a common chemical in the containers can seep into beverages and raise blood pressure within a few hours.

The research raises new concerns about the chemical bisphenol A, or BPA, which is widely found in plastic bottles, plastic packaging and the linings of food and beverage cans. Chronic exposure to BPA, as it is commonly known, has been associated with heart disease, cancer and other health problems. But the new study is among the first to show that a single exposure to the chemical can have a direct and fairly immediate impact on cardiovascular health.

The study found that when people drank soy milk from a can, the levels of BPA in their urine rose dramatically within two hours – and so did their blood pressure. But on days when they drank the same beverage from glass bottles, which don't use BPA linings, there was no significant change in their BPA levels or blood pressure.

A single instance of increased blood pressure may not be particularly harmful. But the findings suggest that for people who drink from multiple cans or plastic bottles every day, the repeated exposure over time could contribute to hypertension, said physician Karin B. Michels, an expert on BPA who was not involved in the new research.

Michels said the design of the new study was impressive and its findings “concerning.” About 30 percent of adults nationwide have hypertension, and BPA exposure is ubiquitous.

BPA has been used since the 1960s to make countless everyday products like plastic bottles, food containers, contact lenses, and even sippy cups and baby bottles. The chemical can leach into food, and studies show that the vast majority of Americans who are tested have BPA in their urine.

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