



PRESS STATEMENT

Brussels, 23 June 2010 - embargoed until 00.01, 23 June (GMT)

European health group supports call for reducing exposure to BPA

The Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL) has added its name to a letter to European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) calling for a reduction in human exposure to the synthetic chemical, Bisphenol A (BPA). (1)

The signatories, which include professors and scientists from US, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Switzerland and UK and more than 40 international and national health groups, welcome the fact that the current review is taking into account a large number of studies in its opinion on BPA due to be published in early July 2010.

The opinion from EFSA has been delayed to take into account "hundreds of studies" and the "most recent scientific literature", according to the EFSA website. (2) The Open Letter from scientists and NGOs says that "Only a tiny minority of studies have articulated that BPA exposure is safe... but it is these few flawed studies that EFSA previously relied on to declare BPA safe."

Genon Jensen, Director of the Health and Environment Alliance, says a significantly revised opinion from EFSA would be very important for health protection. "With BPA suspected of playing a role in diseases such as breast cancer and diabetes, reducing levels of human exposure is necessary. This is especially true for the developing fetus in the womb, which is vulnerable because BPA can cross the placenta." Cancer groups in the UK and France, such as Breast Cancer UK and the French League Against Cancer, are also calling for bans on BPA.

Regulators in the US and Canada, and some EU member states, such as Denmark and France, have already taken action to reduce exposure to BPA. Some other countries are critical of the current EU position. Earlier this month, the German authorities said that although there was a lack of data on some aspects of Bisphenol A, what exists should be sufficient to take decisions on the application of the precautionary principle. (3)

HEAL believes that the EU should take the lead in setting precautionary standards for food contact materials to avoid the contradictions and the duplication of efforts associated with each Member State acting separately.

If the opinion from EFSA in early July recognises that BPA is harmful, and consequently recommends a reduction in Tolerable Daily Intake (TDI), this will lead to a reduction in or elimination of the amount of BPA that can be used in food contact materials, such as baby bottles, drinking water bottles and the lining of tins containing food and drink. Ultimately, this will help reduce human exposure to this chemical.

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1. Open Letter and associated press release available from Diana@env-health.org (embargoed until 23 June at 12.00).
2. EFSA statement on their website:
<http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/ceftopics/topic/bisphenol.htm>

To give the European Commission an up-to-date overview of the safety of BPA, EFSA will now deliver a scientific opinion in early July rather than end of May. This is due to the need for the Panel to consider hundreds of studies in its review and analysis of the most recent scientific literature. The opinion will also include the review of the Stump study on the possible neurodevelopmental effects of BPA and the review of the scientific arguments provided by Denmark in support of the Danish government's recent decision to ban the substance in food contact materials for infants.

3. German Federal Environmental Agency report and press statement on BPA available at http://www.umweltbundesamt.de/uba-info-presse-e/2010/pe10-033_bisphenol_a_a_chemical_with_adverse_effects_produced_in_large_quantities.htm

Chemical Health Monitor is an initiative of the Health and Environment Alliance (www.env-health.org). The project's website is in development at www.chemicalshealthmonitor.org

The Health and Environment Alliance aims to raise awareness of how environmental protection improves health. It achieves this by creating opportunities for better representation of citizens' and health experts' perspectives in the environment and health-related European policy-making. Our membership includes a diverse network of more than 60 citizens', patients', women's, health professionals' and environmental organisations across Europe and has a strong track record in increasing public and expert engagement in both EU debates and the decision-making process.