

Moms Fight Back: The Battle Against BPA

Written by Jane Sheppard

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It may be quite astonishing to learn what's currently going on in the bisphenol a (BPA) industry. BPA is a chemical additive used to strengthen plastic. It's found in polycarbonate plastic food and drink bottles, including baby bottles and sippy cups. It's also in most dental sealants and in the lining of aluminum food and beverage cans, including baby formula.

BPA is a chemical that disrupts the development of the reproductive system and the brain, as well as causing other health problems. Babies and fetuses, of course, are the most vulnerable. There's so much evidence about the harmful effects of BPA that the government is finally acting to ban it from products meant for children under age 3.



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If you haven't yet heard, representatives from several big companies in the canned food and beverage industry—including Coca Cola, Alcoa, Del Monte, Crown, the American Chemical Council and more—held an emergency meeting in late May to strategize how to stop a government ban on BPA and manipulate public opinion with fear tactics, specifically targeting young mothers. These companies are making friends in the government and are running a major lobbying campaign to block the ban on the use of BPA in baby bottles, toddler cups, baby food and formula containers.

In this meeting, they discussed ways to persuade the public against choosing BPA-free packaging, including threatening to limit access to affordable baby food. One of the strategies they discussed in this meeting was to get a young pregnant mother to be a spokesperson to talk

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about the benefits of eating from food cans lined with BPA, as well as the benefits of feeding babies from BPA-tainted bottles!

Really, now—how stupid do they think we are?

It's truly disturbing, but not at all surprising. Sadly, this is business as usual in a world where the corporate bottom line and pleasing stockholders is the No. 1 goal. I've been following this stuff for decades and I fully know how industry manipulates the public and the government. Corporate greed keeps toxic products on the market, regardless of the harmful effects on human health. There's nothing new about tainted research and expensive PR campaigns touting the benefits of dangerous products. It happens all the time, especially in the food, pharmaceutical and chemical industries.

But the simple truth is: We moms have all the power!

Yes, we moms are the ones who do the spending that drives corporate profits. Since we are the consumers, we can decide which companies to support. Deceptive strategies wither and die without consumer participation.

In a very short time after the BPA industry e-mail was leaked to the press, mom bloggers were all over it, spreading the news rapidly through Twitter, Facebook and other social networks. The good news is that if you stay connected with articles like this, you can keep aware of issues affecting your families. The old systems of secrecy and manipulation are crumbling in this new, open culture.

We've entered a new age of corporate transparency that sheds the light on deception. As parents, we are becoming aware of issues affecting the well-being of our children, and we can make empowered decisions. The Internet is a tremendous tool and online social networks are having a profound change on our society and culture.

Back when my daughter was little, there was not a lot of info out there, and few alternatives available. Many times I felt like I was struggling against mainstream acceptance of

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massmarketed parenting, and my natural parenting ideas seemed radical. Now I'm thrilled to see a greater acceptance of natural alternatives, innovative ideas and life-giving solutions coming from everywhere! I believe our planet is in a fast-moving shift into restoring a natural, sustainable, ecological balance and we, as moms and consumers, are playing a big part in this.

There are alternatives to toxic food, bottles, cans, toys, mattresses, skin care products and every other unhealthy product that's marketed to us. Many new alternatives are currently expensive, since high-quality, natural materials are not massproduced the way the cheap toxins are. But there are also plenty of ways to maintain a natural, healthy lifestyle on a small budget.

There are some things you can do right now to avoid exposure to BPA. Limit your use of canned foods. If you must use them, rinsing canned fruits or vegetables might reduce BPA amounts. The Environmental Working Group has an excellent list of babysafe formula and baby bottles at ewg.org/babysafe. And instead of using polycarbonate plastic travel mugs and water bottles, use unlined stainless-steel containers whenever possible. (Polycarbonate is marked with the recycling code #7 or the letters "PC".) You can also ask your dentist for BPA-free dental fillings and sealants.

In addition, it's important to stay informed about legislation to ban BPA. Minnesota recently passed a statewide ban of BPA in baby bottles, sippy cups and other infant products, and California could very well be next. The Toxics-Free Babies and Toddlers Act (SB 797) is supported by the Environmental Working Group and would eliminate BPA in food and beverage containers for children under 3. Other regions, such as Chicago and Suffolk County, N.Y., have restricted BPA usage as well. There is also legislation being prepared at the federal level: The House and Senate have both introduced bills called the Ban Poisonous Additives Act of 2009, that would regulate and restrict the use of BPA nationwide. Both bills (H.R. 1523 and S. 593) are currently in committee.

We live in an extraordinary time, and we now have an incredible opportunity to remake our society into a truly sustainable, compassionate and health-conscious culture that puts our children's well-being ahead of corporate profits. Let's shop with awareness and create a new future for our kids.

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