

GOVERNMENT TOLD TO 'BAN THE BOTTLE'

Press Release – For Immediate Release - 1st December 2009

***** Campaigners call on Government to end use of BPA in baby bottles *****

***** 61% of British Public want chemical removed from baby bottles *****

***** Scientists' letter to Health Minister raises BPA health concerns *****

Breast Cancer UK today launches a campaign calling on the Government to take action to end the use of controversial chemical, Bisphenol-A (commonly abbreviated to BPA), in baby bottles. This call is backed by NCT (formerly National Childbirth Trust), UNISON, The Women's Environmental Network, the Cancer Prevention and Education Society and CHEM Trust.

Already voluntarily withdrawn from shelves in Canada and the USA, polycarbonate baby bottles made with BPA are still available in the UK, despite our view being that clear and compelling scientific evidence in lab experiments have linked even low level exposure to increased risk of breast cancer and other chronic conditions.

In the first survey of its type ever conducted, just under four out of five (79%) of the public either strongly agree (50%) or agree (29%) 'that it is important that the UK Government acts in a precautionary way when it comes to protecting babies and very young children from BPA'. Women feel even more strongly, those agreeing or strongly agreeing rises to 82% as compared to 76% of men. While 61% of the public think that the UK Government should 'act to end the use of BPA in baby bottles' 61% and only 10% think the Government 'should follow the current FSA guidelines and leave things as they are'.

[NOTE: Results from YouGov are presented below, but can also be [downloaded from here](#) with breakdowns for UK Regions, Gender, Age, Social Grade, Working Status, Marital Status and by number of Children in Households. All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 2101 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 23rd - 25th November 2009. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all UK adults (aged 18+).]

"We fully support Breast Cancer UK taking action against the use of BPA in baby bottles and have been calling for these steps for over a year. With such strong public feeling against this chemical, as shown by this survey, the UK Government must follow Canada and the USA in protecting babies by legislating against its use in making baby bottles, formula tins and baby food containers." Said Jay Francis, BPA-free Campaigner at NCT.

An influential group of scientists from the University of Stirling, Ulster University, University of London, University of Plymouth, and Reading University have also written to Andy Burnham MP, Secretary of State for Health, urging the Government 'to adopt a standpoint consistent with the approach taken by other Governments who have ended the use of BPA in food contact products marketed at children'.

[NOTE: Full text of the letter and signatories can be found below, this letter is also embargoed for 12:01am, 1st December 2009.]

“As a medically qualified pathologist and parent to an 8 month old baby boy, I feel that it is essential for the Government to heed our call for precautionary measures to limit exposure of BPA to very young children” said Professor Vyvyan Howard, of the Biomedical Sciences Research Institute at Ulster University, and signatory to the letter to Andy Burnham MP.

He continued “Babies in their first year have not fully developed the ability to clear BPA from their bodies as quickly as adults. Their hormonal systems are also more susceptible to subtle changes that could have an impact on their long term risks of developing cancer and other chronic conditions. Ending the use of BPA in baby bottles would be a sensible and proportionate response to our current level of scientific understanding.”

The No More BPA campaign is being launched just a day after an expected announcement on BPA, due on the 30th of November 2009, from the US Food and Drug Administration, which has a regulatory authority on food contact products and public health similar to that of the UK Food Standards Agency.

[NOTE: Follow up details of the US FDA announcement will be provided as released on the 30th of November 2009].

The Canadian Government is expected to introduce its regulatory ban on the ‘advertising, sale and importing’ of baby bottles containing BPA by the end of the year. Baby bottle manufacturers, anticipating the Canadian ban as well as expected regulatory action in the US, have already withdrawn baby bottles made with BPA from shelves.

“There are lots of cheap alternatives to using BPA in baby bottles, and all the major manufactures are already offering non-BPA bottles. Putting a ban on BPA bottles in place is likely to increase their sales as parents throw away their polycarbonate bottles” said Clare Dimmer, Chair of Trustees at Breast Cancer UK, and a former breast cancer patient.

She continued, “Keeping BPA baby bottles on the shelves is not an option. Most parents don’t have a degree in chemistry or biology. Do we really expect them to weigh up the evidence in the latest scientific journals on the risks of exposure to a chemical that manufacturers won’t even label on their products? It should be very simple, if there is serious scientific evidence that a chemical in baby bottles could increase the risk of life-limiting illness, it shouldn’t be used. It is time Government stepped in to ban the bottle.”

Sarah Green, National Women’s Office at UNISON said:

“With one million women members, very many of whom will be mothers and grandmothers, the failure of UK manufacturers and government to take action, despite the evidence, will be of great concern. As individuals, there is a limit to what we can do to prevent potential harm, and it is therefore essential that our decision makers take action to protect us, as other governments have done.”

Jamie Page, Chief Executive of the Cancer Prevention and Education Society said:

“Most people think of plastics as inert substances. They do not realise that some of them can release endocrine disrupting chemicals such as BPA. If better materials exist then we should be using them instead, not fighting a rear-guard action to keep old ones in use especially where vulnerable populations such as infants and children are concerned.”

He continued: “Based on all I know now about low dose effects, if I had known that my children were exposed to BPA when they were small I certainly would have done everything I could to have avoided exposing them. Parents and consumers need more information about what is in the products they are buying so they can make informed decisions. The regulators should inform people that there is a huge scientific debate going on about whether BPA is safe. If in doubt most people err on the side of caution – this is only normal especially where children are involved.”

The No More BPA Report [NOTE: ALSO EMBARGOED TO 12:01AM, 1ST DECEMBER 2009], released and authored by Breast Cancer UK, has referenced over 40 published peer reviewed studies, assessments and articles related to BPA exposure and potential increased risk of developing breast cancer, as well as other chronic health conditions including diabetes, heart conditions, and impaired brain function. An embargoed copy of the report can be [downloaded from here](#).

The plastic recycling number 7 is sometimes imprinted on polycarbonate plastics, but as the number 7 code is used as the catchall for 'other plastics', even this limited labelling is very unclear.

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NOTES:

For more information and to request interviews please contact:

Hratche Koundarjian, Campaign Manager, Breast Cancer UK (Charity No: 1088047) T: 07905 911 039, E: hratche@breastcanceruk.org.uk, W: www.breastcanceruk.org.uk

Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland

Tailored releases for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are available, that use regional results from the YouGov survey as well as quotes from scientists in those regions. Please use the contact email above to request.

Campaign website:

The No More BPA Campaign Website can be found at www.nomorebpa.org.uk. The site will go live on Tuesday the 1st of December. Supporters will be encouraged to use the website to email their Member of Parliament calling for a ban on the use of BPA in baby bottles. A high resolution copy of the campaign logo can be downloaded from here:

www.breastcanceruk.org.uk/images/No_More_BPA_Logo_Final.gif

No More BPA Report:

Pre release embargoed copies [12:01am 1st December 2009] of the No More BPA Report can be downloaded in PDF format from here:

http://www.breastcanceruk.org.uk/reports/No_More_BPA_Report_Embargoed_Pre-publication_Final.pdf

YouGov survey results:

All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 2101 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 23rd - 25th November 2009. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all UK adults (aged 18+).

The survey figures can be downloaded with breakdowns for UK Regions, Gender, Age, Social Grade, Working Status, Martial Status and by number of Children in Households (under 18) here. www.breastcanceruk.org.uk/reports/YouGov_Results_Breast_Cancer_UK_BPA.xls

Preamble to questions:

BPA (Bisphenol A) is a chemical that is used in the manufacture of shatterproof plastics. Scientific studies from the last 10 years have linked BPA with cancer and other serious health conditions. Canada has banned the use of BPA in baby bottles, and the largest manufacturers in the USA have stopped selling baby bottles made with BPA. Other regulatory bodies, such as the Food Standards Agency in the UK, say the amount of the chemical in such products is well below levels considered harmful and that the bottles are completely safe to use as long as the manufacturer's instructions are followed. The use of BPA is legal in the UK.

Question 1:

To what extent do you agree or disagree that it is important that the UK Government acts in a precautionary way when it comes to protecting babies and very young children from BPA?

Results for Question1:

	Base	Male	Female
Base: ALL UK Adults	2101	1011	1090
Strongly agree	50%	45%	55%
Agree	29%	31%	27%
Neither agree nor disagree	10%	11%	9%
Disagree	3%	4%	3%
Strongly disagree	2%	1%	2%
Don't know	5%	7%	4%

Question 2:

Which, if any, of the following do you think the UK Government should do? (Please tick all that apply)

Results for Question 2:

	Base	Male	Female
Base: ALL UK Adults	2101	1011	1090
They should act to end the use of BPA in baby bottles	61%	58%	63%
They should ensure that all food contact products such as tins, bottles and containers that are made using BPA are clearly labelled	41%	35%	47%
They should follow the current FSA guidelines and leave things as they are	10%	13%	8%
Don't know	7%	8%	7%

Copy of letter to the Rt. Hon. Andy Burnham MP, Secretary of State at the Department of Health:

Rt. Hon. Andy Burnham MP
Secretary of State for Health
Richmond House,
79 Whitehall,
London SW1A 2NS

1st December 2009

Dear Rt. Hon. Andy Burnham MP,

We are writing to you today as a group of scientific experts, academics and researchers. We understand that a campaign has been launched this week calling on the Government to end the use of Bisphenol-A, also known as BPA, in food contact products marketed at young children and babies.

Although there are still some gaps in our knowledge regarding the health impact of BPA on humans, the major body of scientific research and evidence presented over the last decade strengthens the growing consensus that low level exposure to BPA has a significant impact on increasing the risks of developing conditions such as cancer, diabetes, impaired brain function and behavioural problems in mammalian laboratory animals.

In the United States, a major government-backed survey published in 2007 demonstrated that the group with the highest level of exposure to BPA are children, followed by teenagers and then adults.

While we accept the need for further research into this area, the available body of evidence to date leads us to support the call for Government to review its current attitude to BPA. We urge you now to adopt a standpoint consistent with the approach taken by other Governments who have ended the use of BPA in food contact products marketed at children.

We hope that you will give serious consideration to this matter and we would be happy to discuss our views further with you and your officials.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Philippa Darbre, Academic at the School of Biological Sciences, Reading University.

Prof. Vyvyan Howard, Professor of Bioimaging, Biomedical Sciences Research Institute, Ulster University.

Prof. Andreas Kortenkamp, Head of Centre for Toxicology, University of London.

Prof. Andrew Watterson, Occupational and Environmental Health Research Group, University of Stirling.

Dr John Newby, Medical Information Scientist for the Cancer Prevention Society.

Dr Alan Scarlett, BSc PhD, Post-Doctoral Research Fellow, School of Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences, University of Plymouth.

Prof. Ana Soto, Professor of Cancer Development, Biomedical Sciences Research Institute, Ulster University.

[Note: Names presented in alphabetical order]