HEAVY METALS DON’T BELONG IN BABY FOOD

Significant levels of heavy metals, including lead, arsenic, cadmium, and mercury, were found in baby food—both conventional and organic—in two recent congressional reports.¹ ² According to the World Health Organization, lead, arsenic, cadmium, and mercury are included in the top 10 chemicals of concern for infants and children.³

While these toxins don’t belong in anyone’s food, as heavy metals have been linked to cancer and other diseases,⁴ their presence in baby food is particularly concerning because of the developing brains of babies and young children.

How do heavy metals end up in our baby food?

Heavy metals can be found in the soil and water used to grow food. They can drift from industrial sites, the spraying of pesticides, or other sources. They can lurk in the soil for decades.

Heavy metals can also be introduced into foods during the manufacturing and packaging processes.

We must do more to protect babies from toxic heavy metals in their food.

You can take immediate action:

Sign our petition, and tell the Food & Drug Administration (FDA) that heavy metals don’t belong in baby food.

www.momscleanairforce.org/baby-food-petition

Why are babies and young children at higher risk from toxins in their food?

The science is clear on this. Babies and young children are more vulnerable to the harmful effects of food contaminants than adults.

Not only are their rapidly developing brains at higher risk of damage, but children eat and drink more than adults, pound for pound, so they can be exposed to higher levels of toxins in food.
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How is baby food regulated?

The FDA sets limits for arsenic in rice cereal and limits for lead, arsenic, and cadmium in bottled water, juice, and candy. But aside from the action level established for inorganic arsenic in infant rice cereal, the agency has failed to insure the safety of baby food more broadly. The FDA has few standards for heavy metals. Those standards that do exist are not strict enough to protect babies and young children.

In 2019, a report from the organization Healthy Babies Bright Futures examined toxic heavy metals in baby foods. The report found:

- 95% of food containers tested contained toxic heavy metals (arsenic, lead, cadmium, and mercury).
- One quarter of tested containers contained all of these toxic metals.
- Heavy metal contamination was highest in products containing rice, juice, and sweet potato.
- 88% of foods tested “lack any federal standards or guidance on maximum safe levels of toxic heavy metals like arsenic and lead.”

At the time, the FDA knew about this report and did nothing. Until now.

What is the Baby Food Safety Act?

The Baby Food Safety Act was introduced in 2021 by Representative Raja Krishnamoorthi (IL-08), Representative Tony Cárdenas (CA-29), Senator Amy Klobuchar (MN), and Senator Tammy Duckworth (IL).

The Baby Food Safety Act would dramatically reduce toxic heavy metals—such as arsenic, lead, cadmium, and mercury—in baby food. The Act would fund education for parents about the risks of toxins and research on ways to reduce toxic heavy metals in crops and soil.

How has the FDA responded?

The FDA offered a plan—Closer to Zero—to identify actions the agency will take to reduce exposure to toxic elements from foods eaten by babies and young children.

On November 18, 2021, the FDA will conduct a virtual public meeting to discuss their plan as it relates to impacts of toxic exposure on babies and children, and talk with baby food manufacturers and parents.

What can parents do?

No parent should have to worry that the food she is feeding her children, day after day, could potentially be poisoning them. Demand FDA do its job to ensure the food our babies consume is safe before it hits the shelves.

Sign our petition and tell the FDA that heavy metals don’t belong in baby food.

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Talk to your lawmakers. Demand that our government ensure the food our babies consume is safe before it hits the shelves.

Limit rice and sweet potato in your baby’s diet, because both tend to absorb more pollutants.

Avoid packaged rice snacks like crackers and puffs, which Consumer Reports found had higher levels of heavy metals.

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For sources, please visit:
www.momshealthyairforce.org/sources-baby-food

The mission of Moms Clean Air Force is to protect children from air pollution and climate change. We envision a safe, stable, and equitable future where all children breathe clean air. We fight for Justice in Every Breath, recognizing the importance of equitable solutions in addressing air pollution and climate change. www.momshealthyairforce.org