Bottles and Food Storage

From breastmilk to formula to solids, feeding your children provides the nourishment to help them grow big and strong. Keeping your children's food safe isn't just about what you feed them; it is also what you use to feed them. Many parents have recently become aware of the dangers of Bisphenol-A (BPA) in baby bottles, and most bottle companies have responded with BPA-free options. There has also been a surge in availability of glass bottles. In addition to bottles, parents should also be careful of the BPA and PVC found in other food storage containers that they use for their children's food.

What you should know:

Safe plastic is free of Bisphenol-A (BPA) and phthalates. Many bottles are made of polycarbonate plastic or polyvinyl chloride (PVC), and are then softened using BPA and phthalates, which are known hormone disruptors. A hormone disruptor is a synthetic chemical that acts like or imitates natural hormones.[1] Hormone disruptors may cause "hormone alteration, reproductive system deficits, and low fertility" in boys, and "early-onset puberty" in girls.[2]

A Center for Disease Control study found BPA in 95% of urine of people tested; the younger the subject, the higher the concentration. The median level of chemical tested was higher than what we know can cause harm to animals.[3] In January 2008, a report published by the National Toxicology Program found BPA to be of concern for fetuses and small children. BPA was first discovered in 1891 during a search for synthetic estrogens

Chemicals from plastics are able to leach into your child's food or drink with everyday use and especially with high heat exposure (i.e. microwave use, dishwashing, sterilizing).[4] Studies have recorded the leaching of BPA into the bottle when it is frozen, heated, at room temperature, reused, etc.[5]

Bottles

If you want to use plastics, use polypropylene or polyethylene with #'s 1, 2, 4, 5.3

Avoid products made using plastics with the following numbers on the bottom:

is PVC, which releases phthalates.

is polystyrene, which may leach styrene (a carcinogen)[6] into food, especially if microwaved.

is usually polycarbonate plastic, which can release hormonally disruptive BPA.

Glass is another safe alternative. To avoid all potential risks of plastics you can opt for glass bottles. Many glass bottles now come with a protective sleeve, which babies can use to hold the bottle.

Nipples

Plastic nipples may contain phthalates. Silicone nipples are a good choice as they are available without phthalates.

Food storage

PVC and other toxins can also be found in plastic wrap and food storage containers. Try to use glass or BPA and PVC free storage for food. Plastic wraps that cling are made from PVC, which can leach into food. If you have to store food in plastic containers, stay away from #1, #3, #6 and #7 and don't microwave them.

Dishes

Many of the cute plastic children's dishes we use are made with melamine, the product that caused urinary tract infections and kidney damage in China when ingested through infant formula. The FDA responded that no level of melamine exposure is safe for an infant. Studies as late as 2006 showed leaching from food containers such as mugs made of melamine into the contained food. Instead, use stainless steel or safer plastics.

Resources:

[1] Women's Health and the Environment Network – www.wsn.org
[2] "Do You Know What's In Your Baby's Mattress?"; Healthy Child, Healthy World – www.healthychild.org
[3] Barnett, Sloan, Green Goes with Everything p.116
[4] http://hubpages.com/hub/How-to-Avoid-BPA-in-Baby-Bottles-and-Sippy-Cups
[5] "Smart plastics guide: healthier food uses of plastics for parents and children." Institute for agriculture and trade policy." October 2005.
[6] www.ewg.org