

South Korea listens to the science on BPA

BY [STEVEN HENTGES, PH.D](#) ON MARCH 31, 2016 IN [INDUSTRY](#), [POLICY](#)

Last week the South Korean Ministry of Food and Drug Safety ([MFDS](#)) published its [risk assessment of BPA](#) in the peer-reviewed scientific journal Environmental Research. The MFDS is a government agency that is responsible for promoting public health by ensuring the safety of foods and other products.

The details are important, but what everyone wants to know is the bottom line. MFDS concluded:

““ *We find that there are no health concerns for the general Korean population from dietary exposure or from aggregated exposure [to BPA].*

So why should you care since, if you're reading this, you probably don't live in South Korea? You may not even like Korean food. But it's not about where you live or what kind of food you like. It's all about the science, and that you should care about.

To reach their clear conclusion, the MFDS researchers followed well-established scientific procedures to assess potential risks from exposure to BPA. In broad terms, this involved measuring exposure of the Korean population to BPA and comparing those exposure levels with a health-based safety guidance value.

To measure exposure, the researchers took advantage of a recent MFDS study, which involved 2,044 participants ranging in age from one month to greater than 60 years. Exposure to BPA was estimated using three independent methods using data from the study.

For the overall safety conclusion, the exposure estimates were compared with a Tolerable Daily Intake (TDI), which the researchers derived from extensive animal testing data on BPA. As noted by the researchers, “[e]ven conservatively estimated BPA exposures were less than 2% of the TDI.” In plain English,

““ *There are no health concerns for the general Korean population.*

Importantly for us non-Koreans, the MFDS researchers also evaluated BPA exposure data from North America and Europe for comparison to the Korean data. Since exposure to BPA was similar in each region, the MFDS safety conclusion can be extrapolated to further conclude that there are no health concerns from exposure to BPA in other regions of the world as well.

But there's no need to extrapolate. Other government bodies around the world, notably including the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA), have conducted their own assessments and independently reached similar conclusions. As a straightforward and representative example, FDA, based on its own assessment, answers the question "[Is BPA safe?](#)" with a single unambiguous word: "Yes."