

What Stanford forgot to tell you about BPA

BY STEVEN HENTGES, PH.D ON JULY 6, 2016 IN INDUSTRY, POLICY

Last week a flurry of news stories reported on a new study of [bisphenol A \(BPA\)](#) in canned foods led by a researcher at Stanford University. Based on an analysis of BPA levels in urine and self-reported canned food consumption, the researchers came to the conclusion that [“\[c\]anned food\[s\] ... were associated with higher levels of urinary BPA concentrations.”](#) But the study missed the point: yes, we know BPA is present in trace amounts, but is it safe?

It's not a secret that epoxy resins made from BPA have been widely used for several decades as the protective coating inside food and beverage cans. If you're not aware of this, perhaps it's because the coatings protect food from contamination so well, in particular from microbes that can make you sick. You likely would have heard about these coatings if they failed on a regular basis, or even once. That might be worthy of a headline, but you've never seen that headline because the coatings are so effective.

While consumers are exposed to trace amounts of BPA from these coatings, as the researchers point out in their paper, when BPA is ingested, it is metabolized and quickly eliminated from the body through urine. In addition, the metabolite has no known biological activity and the metabolic process is so efficient that almost no BPA itself ever reaches the bloodstream.

Yet something is missing from the story, something that Stanford apparently forgot to tell you. It's hardly breaking news that people are exposed to trace amounts of BPA from canned foods, but is it safe? The scientific paper, the Stanford University press release, a related Stanford Medicine report and, with one exception, all of the media reports do not address this important question. How could they all forget?

Kudos to CNN not only for asking the question, but asking the authority in the U.S. – the Food and Drug Administration. The complete answer they got, as reported in the [CNN article](#) is below:

The FDA has performed extensive research and reviewed hundreds of studies about BPA's safety, and has determined that current authorized uses of BPA in food packaging are safe. The FDA continues to monitor literature and research on BPA. –Lauren Sucher, a spokeswoman for the Food and Drug Administration, in a statement to CNN

There you have it. FDA says safe. Too bad that Stanford forgot to mention it.