

Should You Be Concerned About BPA and Paper Receipts?



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Most likely the last time you went to the pharmacy or grocery store you left with the products you bought and a paper receipt. It's also likely that you've read that paper receipts are harmful because they contain bisphenol A (BPA) as a component of the thermally reactive coating on the surface of the receipts.

But not everything you read is true, especially these days. Before jumping to conclusions let's take a look at the facts, which can serve as a good basis for determining whether you should be concerned or not. We can separately assess if and when you're likely to find BPA in thermal paper receipts today, and whether BPA is harmful, if it is present.

The most recent information on BPA in thermal paper receipts is from a recently published paper on exactly this topic. The paper, in the journal [Environmental Pollution](#), describes analysis of receipts that were collected from various consumer locations (e.g., supermarkets, restaurants, shops and gas stations) in 39 countries on six continents. Included are receipts collected in four states in the U.S., both on the Eastern and Western sides of the country.

Surprisingly, or perhaps not, BPA was not found in any of the receipts collected in the U.S. Although this analysis cannot be considered completely definitive, since not every receipt in the U.S. was analyzed,

the results do strongly suggest that the reported presence of BPA in thermal paper receipts is not something for which individuals in the U.S. need be concerned.

Before completely setting aside that possible concern, should you be worried if BPA were to be found in any thermal paper receipts in the U.S.? With BPA being one of the most intensively studied compounds on earth, that question too can be addressed with reliable research.

Two studies that are particularly relevant are ones that measure exposure of cashiers to BPA after handling BPA-containing receipts. Cashiers are potentially exposed to much higher levels of BPA throughout a work shift than are consumers who would only occasionally handle BPA-containing receipt papers.

In [one study](#), conducted by the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health, volunteers simulated work as a cashier by handling BPA-containing receipts throughout a work shift. In the [second study](#), conducted by the U.S. National Toxicology Program, actual cashiers handled BPA-containing receipts. In each case, exposure to BPA remained well below accepted safe levels and similar to low background levels of BPA experienced by the general population.

These studies support the conclusion of the Food and Drug Administration's assessment of the safety of BPA based on a comprehensive set of data. As succinctly stated on FDA's website: "[Is BPA safe? Yes.](#)" Along with that conclusion, the recent information indicates that we don't need to be concerned about BPA in thermal paper receipts.