You May Be Exposed to BPA, But Does It Matter?

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If you believe what you read in the media or on the internet, everyone is exposed to BPA. But does it matter? Are we exposed to enough BPA that it could be harmful?

After all, just about everything can be harmful at a high enough level. As a simple example, think about aspirin. If you take two aspirin, you can cure a headache. But if you take a whole bottle of aspirin, it can cause serious harm. Even aspirin, which we may think of as harmless, can be harmful at a high enough level.

For BPA, as well as many other chemicals, the best way to measure exposure is with the science of biomonitoring. We know that BPA is efficiently converted to a biologically inactive metabolite after exposure and quickly eliminated from the body in urine. With biomonitoring we can measure the amount of BPA in urine, in the form of its metabolite, and that information can then tell us whether the exposure level was high enough to be harmful.

Biomonitoring studies have been conducted on BPA around the world in recent years. A group of scientists in Spain recently collected those studies and applied a rigorous set of criteria to select the studies of highest quality and reliability. The biomonitoring results from the highest quality studies, conducted on more than 28,000 participants,

were then compared with safe exposure limits for BPA that have been set by government bodies worldwide.

The results from this analysis were recently published by the Spanish researchers in the scientific literature, and their conclusion about exposure levels is very reassuring. Overall, the researchers concluded "*the expected range of estimated human BPA concentrations suggests that potential health risks are unlikely*."

Highlighting the strength of their study, the authors also noted that the analysis "*provides the most accurate summary estimates of BPA exposure in general adult populations available so far*."

The overall conclusion was reached by comparing the biomonitoring results with safe limits for BPA that have been set by government agencies. In every case, the biomonitoring results are about 100-1,000 times below the safe limit values, which indicates that health risks from exposure to BPA are unlikely.

This is particularly relevant for the safe biomonitoring level that has been set by German authorities. As noted by the authors, lower biomonitoring levels "*would pose no risk for adverse health effect and, consequently, would not warrant preventive actions*."

This conclusion on the safety of BPA is consistent with the views of government authorities worldwide. For example the U.S. Food and Drug Administration answers the question "*Is BPA safe?*" with the clear answer "*Yes*."

Going back to the beginning, you may well be exposed to BPA. However, almost certainly the amount to which you are exposed is far below a level that could cause health effects. If you're concerned about your health, as you should be, exposure to BPA is something you don't need to be concerned about.