



BPA Dangerous in Dental Care?

According to MSNBC.com for September 7, a new study concludes that BPA (Bisphenol A) derivatives, increasingly used in dental resins and sealants, are safe for children's dentistry, but that expectant mothers should wait for any dental work until after delivery. The widely used sealants, containing substances that degrade into the controversial chemical, are used for all dental patients, but children and pregnant women and their developing babies are particularly susceptible to the effects of the chemical.



Though BPA is linked to health problems and banned by many plastic bottle manufacturers, the latest report from *Pediatrics* [concluded](#), "We recommend continued use [of products containing BPA derivatives] with strict adherence to precautionary application techniques," adding that "exposure can be reduced by cleaning and rinsing surfaces of sealants and composites immediately after placement."

MSNBC [continued](#), "The team of toxicologists and dentists reviewing the scientific literature for the report concluded that the benefit of protecting children's teeth is greater than the risk posed by brief exposure to BPA. In the U.S., depending on age, between 20 and 40 percent of children had been treated with sealants between 1999 and 2004, and the proportion is likely higher now because of aggressive efforts to improve dental hygiene."

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"If a woman is in serious need of dental work during pregnancy, she should go ahead and get her teeth fixed," MSNBC quoted Dr. Philip J. Landrigan saying. Landrigan, who is study co-author and director of Children's Environmental Health Center at Mount Sinai School of Medicine, added: "If it's something that can wait, in the spirit of precaution, we would encourage the woman to wait till after her baby is born."

Another co-author of the study interviewed by MSNBC is Dr. Burton Edelstein, chairman of social and behavioral sciences at Columbia University College of Dental Medicine. Edelstein noted, "The amount of exposure is extremely low." He emphasized the importance of [the mother's] dental hygiene and the potential impact of untreated gum disease on her developing fetus. Edelstein and other dentists interviewed by MSNBC argued there are ways to protect even pregnant women from BPA, and that it's released only when certain chemicals in the resins come in contact with saliva.

Nevertheless, many manufacturers of plastic bottles, particularly those used by children, have been prompted to change formulas to exclude the substance. In January, FDA officials called for more research, explaining that the agency had "some concern about the potential effects of BPA on the brain, behavior and prostate glands of fetuses, infants and children."

BPA mimics estrogen, and is known as an endocrine- (or hormone-) disrupting chemical. Canada may place it on its list of toxic substances, according to the website [Toxic Nation](#), because studies show it



Written by [Kelly Holt](#) on September 7, 2010

can play havoc with hormones. It's associated with prostate and breast cancer, immune system dysfunction, early female puberty, and higher miscarriage rates. Toxic Nation also cited a *Journal of the American Medical Association* study linking, for the first time, "normal" levels of BPA in a large U.S. population with a higher risk of heart disease and diabetes. Such levels can produce a wide range of adverse effects, including reproductive, behavioral and developmental problems.

Critics of BPA urge people to avoid the chemical. Fred von Saal, Curators' professor of biology at the University of Missouri at Columbia, and a leading expert on BPA, believes children should receive sealants only if they have a clear tendency to develop tooth decay:

This chemical is one that you should not be exposed to at any level. There are lots of sources of BPA and you want to avoid anything that adds to your body's burden. And the younger you are, the more sensitive you are to this chemical.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention surveys revealed measurable levels of BPA metabolites in more than 95 percent of U.S. residents, even though the compound has a short half-life and should be eliminated quickly from the body.

People in the United States are frequently and repeatedly exposed to BPA, experts say. The solution, claim Von Saal and others, is for resin manufacturers to come up with a dental product that doesn't lead to BPA exposure.



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