

Press Relation Officer: Martin Ittershagen

-staff: Stephan Gabriel Haufe, Dieter Leutert,
Fotini Mavromati, Doreen Redlich, Martin Stallmann

Address: Postfach 1406, 06813 Dessau-Roßlau

Telephone: 0340/2103 -2122, -6625, -2250, -2318, -2637, -2507

E-Mail: pressestelle@uba.de

Internet: www.umweltbundesamt.de // www.fuer-mensch-und-umwelt.de

Bisphenol A – a chemical with adverse effects produced in large quantities

Current background paper by the Federal Environment Agency

The substance Bisphenol A is frequently mentioned in media reports on hazardous chemicals. Over and over reports about Bisphenol A in the environment and in our bodies makes people feel insecure. What kind of substance is it, where can Bisphenol A be found and what is the risk for human health and environment? The Federal Environment Agency (UBA) comments on the health risks of Bisphenol A and informs about actions that can be taken to reduce the risk. To protect human health and environment Jochen Flasbarth, president of UBA, recommends producers as well as users of this substance to use alternative substances already at this state of knowledge for reasons of precaution.

Bisphenol A can be found in many goods of daily life: cans, DVDs, thermal paper, food grade packaging and baby bottles. From these products Bisphenol A can leach and thus can be taken up by humans. Production, processing and recycling can pollute rivers and lakes with Bisphenol A. The precursor for the production of polycarbonates and epoxy resins is with a production volume of 3.8 million tons each year among the chemical with the highest production volume worldwide.

Bisphenol A acts like the female hormone oestrogen. Although it is in many cases less potent than oestrogen, animal and human studies suggest that it may be associated with reproductive disorders.

According to the risk assessments of the European Existing Chemicals Programme and the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) this substance is safe for consumers. In contrast, Canada, Denmark and France have banned baby bottles or other products for children containing Bisphenol A for precautionary reasons. Jochen Flasbarth for UBA: "There's is still a lack of data but what is already known about Bisphenol A should be sufficient to take decisions on the application of the precautionary principle and limit the use of special products containing Bisphenol A."

The European regulation on chemicals REACH (Registration, Evaluation and Authorisation of Chemicals) strengthen the responsibility of the chemical industry. Industries which produce or use Bisphenol A are responsible to assess the risks of Bisphenol A for human health and the environment over the whole life cycle and to reduce potential risks. The results of these risk assessments have to be presented to the European authorities in a dossier for registration by 30 November 2010. The Federal Environment Agency will scrutinize this dossier and then take

The new background paper on "Bisphenol A - a chemical with adverse effects produced in large quantities" can be downloaded free of charge:

http://www.umweltbundesamt.de/uba-info-medien/mysql_medien.php?anfrage=Kennummer&Suchwort=3782

An English summary is included. A full translation will be available shortly.

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