

## What's Wrong With Plastic?

Some types of plastics can leach chemicals into foods and beverages. These chemicals include suspected carcinogens or endocrine (hormone) disruptors. Hormone disruptors have the ability to mimic, block or otherwise interfere with the signals of naturally-occurring hormones throughout the body. Some scientists suspect that they may be linked to some alarming health trends, including reduced sperm counts and fertility, and increases in breast, testicular, and prostate cancers.

Endocrine disrupting chemicals may be present in children's toys, dental sealants, food cans lined with plastic film or even shower curtains. While some plastics appear to be free of these chemicals, there is currently **no** way for the consumer to be absolutely sure of the safety of any plastic. Nevertheless, being aware of the plastic recycling codes (see guide below) can help you steer clear of plastics which currently may present a health risk.

#1- Polyethylene terephthalate (PETE or PET) – no known hazards.

#2- High density polyethylene (HDPE) – no known hazards.

#3- Poly Vinyl Chloride (PVC or Vinyl) – plasticizers (phthalates and DEHA) are added to many PVC products. PVC is commonly used in plastic wraps and in food containers.

**Avoid use.**

#4- Low density polyethylene (LDPE)- no known hazards.

#5- Polypropylene (PP)- no known hazards.

#6- Polystyrene (PS or Styrofoam) – made from styrene and P-nonylphenol, both suspected endocrine disruptors. Styrene is also a suspected carcinogen. Styrene leaches into fatty foods and alcoholic beverages. **Avoid use.**

#7- Other resins, including polycarbonate (PC)- most clear plastic baby bottles and 5-gallon water bottles are made of PC. Bisphenol-A, an endocrine disrupter in PC, has been found in water and heated infant formula heated in PC. **Avoid use.**

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Note: A "microwavable" label on a plastic container only means it will not break or melt in the microwave. It does not address the fact that certain plasticizing chemicals (noted above) can leach into food when heated. Foods with a high fat content present the greatest risk as most chemicals that leach from plastic are lipophilic (fat loving) and heat speeds up the leaching process into the fat. To avoid this risk, never use plastic containers to heat food. For heating or storage, use glass or lead-free ceramic containers. Unwrap foods purchased in plastic wraps and store as above or in wax paper or cellulose bags.