

Overview of BPA Usage in Food Contact Applications

BPA is a structural component in polycarbonate beverage bottles. It is also a component in metal can coatings, which protect the food from directly contacting metal surfaces. BPA has been used in food packaging since the 1960s.

As is the case when foods are in direct contact with any packaging material, small, measurable amounts of the packaging materials may migrate into food and can be consumed with it. As part of its premarket review of food packaging materials, FDA's food contact regulations and food contact notification program assesses the likely migration from the packaging material to assure that any migration to food occurs at safe levels.

Heightened interest in the safe use of BPA in food packaging has resulted in increased public awareness as well as scientific interest. As a result, many exploratory scientific studies have appeared in the public literature. Some of these studies have raised questions about the safety of ingesting the low levels of BPA that can migrate into food from food contact materials. To address these questions the National Toxicology Program, partnering with FDA's National Center for Toxicological Research is carrying out in-depth studies to answer key questions and clarify uncertainties about BPA.

On the regulatory front, FDA's regulations authorize FDA to amend its food additive regulations to reflect when certain uses of an additive have been abandoned. FDA can take this action on its own initiative or in response to a food additive petition that demonstrates that a use of a food additive has been permanently and completely abandoned. Recently, FDA granted two petitions requesting that FDA amend its food additive regulations to no longer provide for the use of certain BPA-based materials in baby bottles, sippy cups, and infant formula packaging because these uses have been abandoned. As a result, FDA amended its food additive regulations to no longer provide for these uses of BPA.