



Foods

Why am I being warned about potential exposure to chemicals in certain foods?



- Certain foods contain chemicals that are on the [Proposition 65](#) list because they can cause cancer and/or birth defects or other reproductive harm.
- Proposition 65 requires businesses to determine if they must provide a warning about significant exposure to [listed chemicals](#).

Some foods contain chemicals on the Proposition 65 list.

Food is essential to life and good health. However, many foods contain substances, such as saturated fats, salt, and sugar, that should be consumed in moderation. Similarly, some foods contain Proposition 65-listed chemicals. This does not mean that these foods should never be eaten. But interested consumers can decide whether and how often to eat these foods if they wish to reduce their exposure to these chemicals.

The Proposition 65-listed chemicals commonly found in foods are:

- [Acrylamide](#) is formed mostly on the surface of plant-based foods when they are browned during frying, roasting, grilling, or baking. In general, the browner the surface, the higher the level of acrylamide.
 - ▶ Acrylamide levels can vary among different kinds of foods and even among different brands of the same kind of food. Many foods have low levels of acrylamide that do not pose a significant cancer risk, and these foods do not require a warning. A warning for acrylamide on a food product suggests that regular consumption of the food over time can pose a greater cancer risk than regular consumption of foods with lower acrylamide levels.
- [Arsenic \(inorganic\)](#) is a naturally occurring chemical element in the Earth's crust.
 - ▶ Some plant crops, such as [rice](#), can absorb arsenic. When rice is grown in soil with elevated arsenic levels, the amount of arsenic in the rice can be elevated.
 - ▶ Some herbal medicines from India and China may contain arsenic.
 - ▶ Some edible seaweed (especially hijiki, a short, black, noodle-like seaweed) can absorb arsenic from water.
- [Bisphenol A \(BPA\)](#). This chemical is used in some coatings for cans, jar lids, and bottle caps. BPA is also used in some polycarbonate plastic bottles and other food contact items. However, the use of BPA in these items is decreasing.
 - ▶ BPA can leach into food or beverages from BPA-based linings in metal food and drink cans, jar lids, and bottle caps.
- [Cadmium](#) is a metal found in certain fish, shellfish, and organ meats. Some leafy vegetables, like spinach grown in cadmium-rich soils, take up cadmium.

- [Di\(2-ethylhexyl\)phthalate \(DEHP\)](#) is a type of phthalate added to many plastics to make them flexible, and can be gradually released into certain foods and beverages from plastic food packaging.
- [Lead](#) is a metal found in some dietary supplements, certain balsamic vinegars, and some imported spices such as turmeric. In the past, some imported candies, including some products with chili and tamarind, have had significant amounts of lead.
- [Mercury](#) is a metal that can accumulate in certain types of [fish and seafood](#).
 - ▶ Fish that tend to have the highest levels of mercury include: king mackerel, shark, tilefish (from the Gulf of Mexico), swordfish, marlin, bigeye tuna, bluefin tuna, and orange roughy.
 - ▶ Some dietary supplements and traditional medicines may contain mercury.

How can I reduce my potential exposure to Proposition 65-listed chemicals in certain foods?

- ✓ Eat more fresh foods, rather than processed or canned food products.
- ✓ Limit your consumption of heavily fried and grilled foods. Fry foods at temperatures of 170 degrees or less, and in particular, cook potato strips such as french fries to a golden yellow rather than a golden brown color. This will reduce the formation of acrylamide.
- ✓ Include alternatives to rice-based foods in your infant's diet.
- ✗ Avoid using polycarbonate plastic containers and tableware for hot food or drinks, and avoid microwaving foods in polycarbonate plastic containers.
- ✓ Store food and liquids in glass or stainless steel containers, rather than plastic ones.
- ✓ Choose fish and shellfish that are lower in mercury, such as salmon, trout, tilapia, cod, sole, sardines, shrimp, oysters, and other shellfish.
- ✓ If you are pregnant, be especially careful not to consume more than the [recommended daily amount of fish that may contain mercury](#).
- ✓ When consuming fish caught from California water bodies and coastal areas, follow [OEHHA sport fish advisories and safe eating guidelines](#).
- ✓ Check federal and state websites that monitor levels of lead in [imported candies](#) and [spices](#).
- ✓ Eat a well-balanced diet with adequate calcium, iron, and vitamin C, which can help reduce the amount of lead your body absorbs.
- ✓ Limit your consumption of shellfish and certain animal organ meats (liver and kidney) to moderate amounts.

For more information:**General Fact Sheets and Resources**

- US Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA)
 - ▶ EPA-FDA Advice about Eating Fish and Shellfish
<https://www.epa.gov/fish-tech/2017-epa-fda-advice-about-eating-fish-and-shellfish>
- US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)
National Institutes of Health (NIH)
 - ▶ Acrylamide and Cancer Risk
<https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/causes-prevention/risk/diet/acrylamide-fact-sheet#q6>
- US Food and Drug Administration (FDA)
 - ▶ Analytical Results from Inorganic Arsenic in Rice and Rice Products Sampling
<https://www.fda.gov/media/86074/download>
 - ▶ For Consumers: Seven Things Pregnant Women and Parents Need To Know About Arsenic in Rice and Rice Cereal
<https://www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm493677.htm>
 - ▶ Lead in Food, Foodwares, and Dietary Supplements
<https://www.fda.gov/food/metals-and-your-food/lead-food-foodwares-and-dietary-supplements>
 - ▶ Use Caution with Ayurvedic Products
<https://www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm050798.htm>
 - ▶ Import Alert 28-13
https://www.accessdata.fda.gov/cms_ia/importalert_1143.html
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
 - ▶ Lead in Foods, Cosmetics, and Medicines
<https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/tips/candy.htm>
- California Department of Public Health (CDPH)
 - ▶ Lead in Candy Program
<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CEH/DFDCS/Pages/FDBPrograms/FoodSafetyProgram/LeadInCandy.aspx>
 - ▶ Photos of Candies Found to Contain lead Levels in Excess of 0.10 ppm
<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CEH/DFDCS/CDPH%20Document%20Library/FDB/FoodSafetyProgram/LeadInCandy/AlphabeticalListing.pdf>
- California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA)
Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA)
 - ▶ Foods and Beverages at Restaurants and Other Food Facilities
<https://www.p65warnings.ca.gov/fact-sheets/foods-and-beverages-restaurants-and-other-food-facilities>
 - ▶ Mercury and Mercury Compounds
<https://www.p65warnings.ca.gov/fact-sheets/mercury-and-mercury-compounds>
 - Mercury in Fish. Information for People Who Eat Fish
<https://oehha.ca.gov/media/downloads/faqs/hgfactsnontechnical.pdf>

- Fish. Guidelines for eating fish and shellfish
<https://oehha.ca.gov/fish>
- Frequently Asked Questions about Eating Fish for Women 18-49 years and Children 1-17 years
<https://oehha.ca.gov/fish/women-and-children>

Proposition 65

- California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA)
Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA)
 - ▶ Proposition 65: Background
<https://www.p65warnings.ca.gov/faq>
 - ▶ Proposition 65: The List of Chemicals
<https://www.p65warnings.ca.gov/chemicals>
 - ▶ Proposition 65: Fact Sheets
<https://www.p65warnings.ca.gov/fact-sheets>