

Chemicals Banned From Your Kids' Toys Are Chilling in Their Macaroni + Cheese

July 13, 2017 by [LAUREN LEVY](#)



Certain chemicals were banned from kids' teething rings and toys a decade ago, but that doesn't mean children are safe from ingesting them. According to a new study by the Coalition For Safer Food Processing and Packaging, high concentrations of these dangerous chemicals may be in the place you'd least expect: boxes of beloved mac and cheese.

According to a new study of 30 cheese products, boxes of macaroni and cheese with powdered cheese have the highest concentration of phthalates. Not only can these chemicals impact male hormones, but they have also been linked to behavior and learning problems as well as genital birth defects in baby boys.

"The phthalate concentrations in powder from mac and cheese mixes were more than four times higher than in block cheese and other natural cheeses like shredded cheese, string cheese, and cottage cheese," Mike Belliveau, the executive director of the Environmental Health Strategy Center, told the **New York Times**.

Although these chemicals were banned from toys, the Food and Drug Administration has not blocked them from foods, despite the risk to pregnant women and children. In 2014, [a report to the Consumer Project Safety Commission](#) highlighted that the primary sources of phthalates exposure are food, drugs, and beverages — not toys — and urged the FDA to reconsider their regulations.

The new study tested 10 different types of mac and cheese, including those labeled as organic, and found that they all had alarming levels of phthalates. Nine out of the ten products were made by Kraft, and Mike is hoping that parents will demand that this brand investigate how the chemicals are getting into the products that their children and consuming.

"Our belief is that it's in every mac 'n' cheese product — you can't shop your way out of the problem," Mike said.

Mac and cheese is a childhood staple not only because it's easy for parents to make in minutes but also because kids' love the cheesy meal. Phthalates aren't directly added to the food product but are used to make plastic packaging softer as well as in ink and adhesives. During the manufacturing process, it is believed that the chemicals make their way into the food before it's sold.

"A chemical is not allowed in food unless there is a reasonable certainty it will cause no harm," said Tom Neltner, the chemicals policy director for the Environmental Defense Fund. However, due to the evidence surrounding the potential harm that phthalates can cause, he said, "We don't think the FDA can say there is a reasonable certainty of no harm."



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