

Seoul Listens to the Science on BPA



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Monday, July 30, 2018 [SAFETY](#)

Next time you walk down the canned food aisle of the grocery store, take a close look at the labels on the cans. You're likely to see some with logos indicating that the product is BPA-Free. Since the labels provide no information to explain what that really means, you probably assume it must be a good thing. If it isn't, why would they put it on the label?

But like the Seoul Metropolitan Government Research Institute of Public Health and Environment, you don't have to assume anything about BPA in canned foods. A [new study](#) describes how researchers in Seoul measured just how much BPA is in canned foods with the goal of finding out whether that's a good thing or not.

The researchers purchased 104 canned food and beverage products from local stores in Seoul and measured the level of BPA in each product. Not surprisingly, trace levels of BPA were found in many of the products. By itself that doesn't mean much since analytical chemists have become very good at finding miniscule amounts of BPA, and just about everything else, almost everywhere they look.

The presence of BPA at trace levels is an indicator that the cans contain a protective coating made from a BPA-based epoxy resin. The coating prevents metal corrosion and helps to protect the safety and integrity of the contents. That certainly is a good thing. Epoxy resins have been used as protective coatings for decades because they excel in this critical food safety application.

Daily intake of BPA was then calculated based on Korean food consumption patterns and compared with safe intake levels set by government bodies. Using scientific data rather than assumptions, the researchers concluded that "*the risk of bisphenol [A] exposure owing to*

canned food consumption for the population in Korea was low.” That conclusion should be applicable elsewhere since the researchers reported that BPA levels in Korean products were similar to levels reported worldwide.

That conclusion is also consistent with the conclusion [recently reached](#) by the South Korean Ministry of Food and Drug Safety ([MFDS](#)) after its comprehensive risk assessment on BPA. As MFDS stated: *“We find that there are no health concerns for the general Korean population from dietary exposure or from aggregated exposure [to BPA].”*

Both MFDS and the researchers in Seoul reached their conclusions before the results of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration’s (FDA) [CLARITY study](#) were available. That study, which is of unprecedented scope and magnitude for BPA, was conducted by FDA senior scientists in FDA’s own laboratory and was aimed at resolving remaining uncertainties about the safety of BPA. That it did and the results, released earlier this year, provide very strong reassurance that the conclusions reached in Korea are right on target.

So is it a good thing if a product is BPA-Free? Who knows since [a BPA-Free label doesn’t tell you anything](#) about what actually is in the product. All the label tells you is that the product doesn’t contain something that is safe. The lack of meaningful information in a BPA-Free label begs the question – what is in the product and how do you know that it’s safe? A BPA-Free label doesn’t provide any information to answer that important question.