

Chemical in plastic linked to health risks

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The first large-scale human study of a chemical used to make plastic baby bottles, aluminum can linings and myriad other common products, found double the risk of cardiovascular disease, diabetes and liver problems in people with the highest concentrations in their urine, British researchers reported Tuesday.

The findings confirm earlier results obtained in animals, increasing pressure on the Food and Drug Administration to limit use of the chemical bisphenol A, or BPA.

The compound is the primary ingredient of polycarbonate plastics, which are found in a wide variety of products.

There have been growing concerns about its safety as studies in rodents have linked it to diabetes, brain damage, developmental abnormalities, pre-cancerous changes in the prostate and breast and a variety of other health problems.

About 7 billion pounds of the chemical are produced worldwide each year, and studies by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have found that 93 percent of Americans have detectable levels in their urine.

The new findings were published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, coinciding with an FDA hearing Tuesday on BPA in Washington, D.C.

"This is a human study that really calls into question

ABOUT BPA

BPA is used in lightweight, durable plastics.

Products include baby bottles, sippy cups, reusable food and drink containers, such as sports water bottles and Tupperware, compact discs, DVDs, eye-glass lenses and sports safety goggles and helmets.

Most recyclable, single-use plastic bottles, such as those for soft drinks and bottled water, don't contain BPA.

To reduce exposure, avoid non-recyclable plastic containers that have the number 7 on the bottom; avoid using these plastics in the microwave, and don't wash them in the dishwasher.

Source: Associated Press

FDA's assertion that BPA is safe," said Dr. Anila Jacob of the Environmental Working Group, an activist group.

An FDA representative, however, defended the agency's actions at the hearing. "A margin of safety exists that is adequate to protect consumers, including infants and children, at the current levels of exposure," said Laura Tarentino, a senior FDA scientist.

But a draft report issued earlier this year by the U.S. government's National Toxicology Program, which has no regulatory authority, concluded that there was "some concern" that the chemical poses a risk to fetuses, babies and children.