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**Conversation:** Ban Dangerous Plastics

**Subject:** Ban Dangerous Plastics

Plastics have been touted to the public as benign, as not leaking their chemicals into our food supply. This appears now to be a false assumption. If plastics deposit chemicals into food, the plastics must go.

There can be no compromise on this position. BPA and pthalates leakage was only recently discovered on products which have been in existence for 50 years. This shocking discovery means that we should "stand down" on plastics in or around food. Get rid of them, until proven safe, rather than the reverse, which is to leave them in the environment until proven harmful.

While the study on the detrimental health effects of BPA upon children is commendable it represents only the "tip of the iceberg" on the negative health effects of all food related plastics on human health. Furthermore, I believe that it is unreasonable and discriminatory for the authors to categorically conclude that BPA has health effects on children but it's effects upon adults are "negligible". What is negligible for some adults can be severely debilitating for others. Just because the adult or child victims do not immediately notice a problem, or they or their doctor do not realize what is causing their illness, does not equate with "safe". The long-term cumulative effects of exposure to plastics can be difficult to impossible to isolate or measure. Once BPA or any other substance has been shown to be hazardous for the public's health at any age it should be removed from the market. This is especially true when reasonable non-hazardous alternatives such as glass containers are available that have always been shown to be "safe".

Additional sources of plastic food contamination that are in need of change are:

(1) Pthalates which bleed into food from plastic packaging. Flexible soft-drink bottles and squeeze bottles contain pthalates. It is used to make plastics flexible. Cola drinks containing phosphoric acid attack the plastic and dissolve it into the drink.

(2) Polyethylene sprayed on cardboard cups, milk cartons etc. Ethylene is nature's insecticide. It occurs naturally in most fruits and vegetables as they ripen. Drinks made from chlorinated water in polyethylene sprayed containers or sipped through polyethylene straws expose the consumer to the same toxic ingredients as contained in perchlorethylene or trichlorethylene. Supermarkets sell cheese and lunch meats and other foods in polyethylene bags. Dairy milking machines collect milk from cows in polyethylene tubing. Even medical tubing and bags such as used for blood transfusions and hemodialysis are made of polyethylene.

(3) Teflon coated non-stick cooking pots and pans or grills off-gas toxins that contaminate the food.

(4) Rotisserie chicken in plastic packaging displayed under heat lamps in supermarkets off-gas toxins that contaminate the food.

(5) Many canned foods come in cans that are lined with plastic to stop the metal can from contaminating the food. However the plastic liner also contaminates the food, only with different contaminants.

I have proved to myself by direct comparison the positive difference between glass and aluminum cans for soft drinks as contrasted with the same drink in a plastic bottle. The former are OK. The plastic is not. Ketchup and mustard in plastic squeeze bottles is bad. The mustard and ketchup in glass is OK.

The use of plastics in contact with food has an widespread detrimental effect upon public health. We are inviting the same type of major health problems as experienced by the ancient Romans when they lined their water pipes with lead. This was probably the biggest single factor in the decline and fall of the Roman empire.

The cost to our economy in real terms for illnesses caused by exposure to plastics is staggering. A good way to control health care costs is to eliminate the source of the illnesses before they occur. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.