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New Report: *What's in My Baby's Food?*

The latest report on a recurring topic touched down in late October, the week before National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week. The new research, *"What's in My Baby's Food*, "documenting lead and traces of other heavy metals in infant and toddler edibles, reveals nothing Americans have not heard before. For more than ten years, parents and health professionals have been aghast by laboratory reports that detect lead, arsenic, mercury, and cadmium in a wide range of foodstuffs marketed for babies and young children. The anxiety and consternation that plague parents in a store's baby food aisle will not dissipate upon reviewing this latest report, but parents can find some useful tips for parlaying the information into the best possible selections.

Excerpted from the Report:

"In most cases, it's not the amount of a particular contaminant that causes concern. Our tests show that most metals are at low levels, and by themselves in any given food cause little concern. It's babies' daily exposures to the many neurotoxins in baby foods that drive the urgency for action."

Healthy Babies, Bright Futures (HBBF), a national non-profit dedicated to reducing toxic exposures in infants and youngsters, spearheaded the latest tests on baby food. Lab results on 168 products divulged heavy metal content in a whopping 95 percent of the foods. On the other hand, the *levels* of contaminants in some of the products are significantly lower than those detected in previous studies.

While traces of lead were the most frequently reported contaminant, present in 94 percent of the foods tested, arsenic accounted for the gravest concerns, in that it persists in rice-based foods, often the earliest and most frequent introductions into an infant's diet. Lead levels, not surprisingly, were highest in two vegetable selections: carrots and sweet potatoes, root vegetables, the most vulnerable to lead uptake in soil.

The question, always, is how to balance concerns about baby food safety with the necessity of providing developmentally appropriate nutrition to little ones. The value of this report is the key to addressing that dilemma. Eliminating/substituting or reducing consumption of five baby food products can lower exposure to trace contaminants by up to 80 percent.

Products to avoid: Rice puffs/snacks made from rice flour, teething rings/biscuits, infant rice cereal, fruit juices. Cereals and snacks made from oats, corn, barley, and other grains can substitute for the rice products, while frozen, peeled bananas and cucumbers are worthy replacements for teething biscuits. Baby juices, long maligned for heavy metal content and potential tooth decay, can be replaced by tap water. Finally, the aforementioned carrots and sweet potatoes need not be banished from a child's dietary line up, but they should be just two entries in a wide-ranging variety of fruits and vegetables.

Efforts to assure a safer supply of infant and toddler foods are ongoing. Indeed, manufacturers and health-focused groups forged a new alliance, the Baby Food Council, in early 2019, to address these concerns. The Food and Drug Administration has already made some inroads in baby food safety and continues to press forward in both educational and regulatory regards.

Happy Valentines' Day 2020!

For Questions or Assistance,

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Both an Executive Summary and the full report are accessible online at:
https://www.healthybabyfood.org/sites/healthybabyfoods.org/files/2019-10/BabyFoodReport_EXEC-SUMM-ENGLISH_R5b.pdf

https://www.healthybabyfood.org/sites/healthybabyfoods.org/files/2019-10/BabyFoodReport_FULLREPORT_ENGLISH_R5b.pdf

Speaking of Feeding Babies . . .

The CDC recommends **1,000 Days' videos** as a parent's resource for determining when baby is ready for solid foods. Twelve videos of roughly one minute each in length help caregivers understand the fundamentals of moving beyond milk.

1,000 Days describes itself as "an organization by moms, for moms . . . partnering with experts including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Healthy Eating Research (HER) to provide accessible and evidence-based information about what, when, and how to feed infants and toddlers."

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLNEN4w93BoO3zAE0xADCe8ij03N7ewPel