

July 20, 2017

STATEMENT of the Coalition for Safer Food Processing and Packaging

We are gratified by the attention the media has given to the important story of phthalates in cheese products, based on the testing we conducted on 30 cheese product items.

It's important that major food industry leaders like The Kraft Heinz Company be part of the solution, so we're happy to learn that Kraft has responded publicly to the media.

There's a lot Kraft didn't say. For one, toxic industrial chemicals don't belong in mac and cheese, or any food products. Even exposure to low levels of hormone-disrupting chemicals like phthalates may harm the developing fetus, according to a new [National Academy of Sciences report](#) published this week.

In fact, some pregnant women and children are exposed daily to phthalates *above* levels that threaten the healthy development of babies and older kids, according to government experts and independent scientists. (See timeline of government action below).

If acceptable risk can be likened to the brim of a cup, the risk cup is already overflowing for phthalates. Some pregnant women and kids are exposed to too much phthalates, period.

This serious public health risk stems from daily exposure to phthalates from *all* sources combined. This is what's known as an unacceptable "cumulative risk."

Kraft asserts that the amount of phthalates in the products we tested is many times "lower than levels that scientific authorities have identified as acceptable." What Kraft didn't say is that the only acceptable levels that exist apply to the *total* daily intake of phthalates from *all* sources combined, *not* from any single product.

With phthalates found in some dairy products, baked goods, oils, infant formula, fast food, consumer products, house dust – together, these daily exposures add up to too much.

To protect public health, further action is needed to reduce all sources of phthalates. We have to start somewhere. Since most people are mainly exposed to phthalates from food, and dairy products are major contributors, we tested a variety of cheese product items. Since the 10 mac and cheese powders we examined had the highest levels of phthalates of the product items we tested, that's a good place to start. Fortunately, safer alternatives to phthalates are widely available for food processing and packaging.

Why focus on Kraft? Because they sell 1.5 million boxes of mac and cheese *daily*, and produce more cheese products than anyone else. With leadership comes responsibility.

Will Kraft and other major food producers commit to identify and eliminate sources of phthalates found in food? That's the real safety question. We're awaiting Kraft's response.

Coalition for Safer Food Processing & Packaging
www.KleanUpKraft.org

Timeline of government action to reduce the cumulative health risk from phthalates:

- In 2008, the U.S. Congress banned several phthalates in children's toys and childcare articles, following similar restrictions adopted by the European Union in 2003;
- In 2011, the European Commission banned most phthalates from use in plastics in contact with fatty foods, including dairy products, and baby food, based on risk assessments conducted by the European Food Safety Authority;
- In 2014, the expert science panel to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) concluded that 10% of pregnant women were exposed to unacceptable cumulative risk from phthalates, as were 5% to 10% of new moms and infants;
- In 2016, public health advocates petitioned the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to ban phthalates in food contact materials (still pending final decision); and
- In 2017, CPSC scientists reported that up to 725,000 American women of reproductive age (from 15 to 45 years old) may still face an unacceptable cumulative risk from daily exposure to phthalates at levels that could harm the healthy development of their baby, should they be pregnant.

View authoritative sources in our [fact sheet](#).