



## Small changes for selecting safer foods and drinks for children

Did you know the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved more than 10,000 food additives? Food additives include stuff added to food to improve safety, extend freshness, and change color, taste, or texture. Common food additives include chemicals, heavy metals, and preservatives. Some additives are put directly in foods. For example, salt helps keep foods safe to eat over a longer period. Other additives come in contact with food during processing or packaging. For example, pizza boxes have several chemicals to control grease.

Not all additives are harmful. However, in the last 10 years, attention has increased on the effects of certain food additives on children's health. Increased exposure to certain food additives can negatively affect children's growth, brain development, and behavior. The list below highlights commonly used additives that pose a risk to children's health and where you might find them.

- Bisphenol A (BPA): Plastic or aluminum food and drink packaging
- Phthalates: Plastic food and drink containers
- Perfluoroalkyl chemicals (PFCs): Heat-resistant and nonstick cooking surfaces
- Perchlorate: Food processing equipment and food containers
- Synthetic artificial food colors (AFCs): Breakfast cereals, drinks, candy, snacks
- Nitrites: Sausage, deli meat, bacon, and other processed meat

Small changes can help limit exposure to problematic food additives. Try one or more of these tips when you shop and cook.

- Look for BPA-free items including baby bottles, water bottles, and lunch boxes.
- Instead of plastic, use glass containers in the microwave.
- Cook with stainless steel pots and pans.
- Avoid plastics with recycling codes of 3, 6, and 7.
- Look at materials in nonstick pots and pans.
- Wash plastic containers by hand instead of in the dishwasher.
- Limit fast food.
- When choosing packaged foods, review food labels and ingredients lists to find items that do not have artificial colors like Blue #2, Red #40, or Yellow #5.
- Limit processed meats, hot dogs, and prepackaged meats.

Talk with your pediatrician or a registered dietitian about your concerns especially when trying to change your daily practices to limit additives in children's food. You are not alone in this.

## Reference

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