



HOLY FAMILY
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Food Shockers: Bugs and BPA

Subject matter in this article may be difficult for some to read, but it is important to know for your good health.

Maggots in your canned tomatoes? Harmful chemicals in your water bottle? You might be shocked, or at least surprised, by what can be found in your food or your food's packaging. Not all of these surprises are necessarily dangerous. But a better understanding of what's really in the items you toss into your supermarket cart can help you make better choices. Here are two unsettling food issues to be aware of, along with suggestions for what to do about them.

The Concern: **Bugs in Your Food**

Like it or not, you can find things with legs in many widely consumed foods. The Food and Drug Administration sets acceptable levels for what it calls "naturally occurring defects." For example, a 24-ounce container of cornmeal can have up to 13 (mostly tiny) insects, 745 insect fragments, and 27 rodent hairs. Other foods allowed to harbor bugs include chocolate, coffee beans, dried beans, grains, nuts, pasta, and peanut butter. And yes, maggots can be found in canned tomatoes. Sure, it's not appetite-stoking, but could it be harmful?

"Generally, these defects, including rodent filth, insects, or mold are not hazardous to health at low levels," says Robert Gravani, Ph.D., a professor of food science at Cornell University. An FDA spokesperson pointed out that on average, the actual quantities of defects are far less than the legal maximum.

What to do: If you find something in your newly purchased food that shouldn't be there, return it to the store or contact the manufacturer for a refund. If you've had the food item for a while, even if it's unopened, it's possible that the pests originated in your home. If your cupboard becomes infested with pests, empty it and vacuum the shelves thoroughly, paying close attention to crevices. Discard heavily infested food and the vacuum-bag contents outdoors. If you are unsure whether a particular item is infested (say, flour), freezing it for four days or heating it in an oven for an hour at 140 degrees F can kill insects in their eggs.

The Concern: **Containers that can make you sick**

News about bisphenol A (BPA), the potentially harmful chemical that can leach from containers into food, seems to be everywhere lately. A recent survey by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that most Americans have measurable amounts of the substance in their urine. The likely source is food-can linings and plastic bottles and other food containers made of polycarbonate, a type of plastic. In 2010, the FDA said it had "some concern about potential effects of BPA on the brain, behavior, and prostate gland in fetuses, infants, and young children." The agency is urging consumers and the food industry to use containers made from other materials.

What to do: When possible, buy fresh food and use alternatives to canned food and hard, clear polycarbonate plastic food containers (sometimes marked with recycle code 7). Use glass containers when heating food in a microwave. Plastics marked with numbers 2, 4, or 5 are unlikely to contain BPA.

Material for this article was from: Food Sense, Consumer Reports on Health July 2011.

For further health tips and current health information, checkout the Holy Family Health Bulletin Board in the LCH.

May you have a Happy, Healthy and Blessed Summer, from your Parish Nurse.

To contact Holy Family Parish Nurse Ministry call 330-688-6412 ext. 462 or view at www.holyfamilystow.org.