

## **95% Of Baby Foods Contain Dangerous Toxic Metals, Can Damage Brain Development, Report Warns** **NEW YORK (CBSNewYork/CNN) —**

Toxic metals which can damage a baby's brain development have been found in nearly every baby food tested, according to a [new study published Thursday](#).

According to testing done by Healthy Babies Better Futures, a staggering 95 percent of the 168 baby foods from major manufacturers in the U.S. contained lead.

The disturbing report also found 73 percent contained arsenic, 75 percent contained cadmium, and 32 percent contained mercury. One-fourth of those foods for infants contained all four dangerous, heavy metals.

One in five baby foods tested had over 10 times the 1-ppb limit of lead endorsed by public health advocates, although experts agree that no level of lead is safe.

The results echoed a [previous study by the Food and Drug Administration](#) that found one or more of the same metals in 33 of 39 types of baby food tested.

The study concluded that foods with the highest risk for neurotoxic harm were rice-based products, sweet potatoes, and fruit juices.

“The chemicals found in baby food – arsenic, lead, cadmium, and mercury – are neurotoxins that can permanently alter the developing brain, erode IQ, and affect behavior,” the report explained.

“These four harmful metals are found in all food – not just baby food... Crops absorb them from soil and water, and they are even found in organic food. Their presence in baby food raises unique concern, because babies are more sensitive to the toxic impacts.”

Healthy Babies Bright Futures calls itself an alliance of scientists, nonprofit organizations, and donors trying to reduce exposures to neurotoxic chemicals during the first months of life.

### **What can parents do?**

The analysis looked at which baby foods are highest risk, and offered safer alternatives.

### **Rice Snacks And Cereals**

Rice cereal is the top source of arsenic in a baby's diet because it is often used as a first food; rice puffs and other rice flour snacks also contain high levels. Healthy Babies suggested cereals low in arsenic, such as oatmeal and multigrain cereals, and rice-free packaged snacks.

“Best first foods for infants are avocado, pureed veggies, peanut-butter oatmeal and salmon,” Pediatrician Tanya Altmann said, via CNN. “They all provide important nutrients that babies need, help develop their taste buds to prefer healthy food and may decrease food allergies.”

She believes meats are a better source of iron and zinc for babies than rice cereal, “so I haven’t been recommending rice cereal as a first food for several years.”

### **Teething Biscuits**

Teething biscuits can contain arsenic, lead, and cadmium, the report warned. Instead, soothe your baby’s pain with frozen bananas, a peeled and chilled cucumber or a clean, wet washcloth — but be sure to watch for choking.

### **Drinks**

Juice is often the go-to drink for parents, but it’s not a good option, says the American Academy of Pediatrics. Juices are high in sugar, lack fiber, and can contribute to tooth decay and later obesity. Apple, pear, grape and other fruit juices can also contain some lead and arsenic, so frequent use is a top source of these heavy metals.

Instead, experts say water and milk are best choices, depending on the age of the child. Babies under six months only need breast milk and formula. The drinks of choice for a child’s second year of life should be water and whole milk. Between age 2 and 5 parents should move to skim or low-fat milk and keep pushing water to hydrate their children.

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