

Microwave Madness: The Dish on Dioxins

RUMOR

Using plastics in the microwave creates dioxins that can migrate into food.

STATUS

Baloney!

ORIGINS

Versions of this e-mail hoax have been circulating for years. (The station number and call letters vary from region to region.)



BE ON THE LOOK OUT FOR:

Subject: Info for the Health Conscious

Subject2: Passing on Healthy Info

I just wanted to pass some information on to you. I was watching Channel 2 this morning. They had a Dr. Edward Fujimoto from Castle Hospital on the program. He is the manager of the Wellness Program at the hospital. He was talking about dioxins and how bad they are for us. He said that we should not be heating our food in the microwave using plastic containers. This applies to foods that contain fat. He said that the combination of fat, high heat and plastics releases dioxins into the food and ultimately into the cells of the body. Dioxins are carcinogens and highly toxic to the cells of our bodies.

Instead, he recommends using glass, Corning Ware, or ceramic containers for heating food. You get the same results without the dioxins. So such things as TV dinners, instant saimin and soups, etc. should be removed from the container and heated in something else.

Paper isn't bad but you don't know what is in the paper. Just safer to use tempered glass, Corning Ware, etc. He said we might remember when some of the fast food restaurants moved away from the foam containers to paper. The dioxin problem is one of the reasons.

Pass this on to your friends.

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

The claim that plastic food wraps and containers can release dioxins in the microwave oven is misleading. First, the vast majority of plastics used in food wraps and packaging containers do not contain the chemical constituents that can form dioxins. Second, dioxins are a family of compounds that are produced by combustion at high temperatures. They can only be formed during combustion at temperatures typically

above 700 degrees Fahrenheit. In other words, even if all of the constituents were present, you also would need to have a very hot fire in your microwave oven, in which case you probably wouldn't eat the food anyway.

According to FDA, "With regard to dioxins, we have seen no evidence that plastic containers or films contain dioxins and know of no reason why they would."

When should you use a plastic product in the microwave? A variety of today's plastic wraps, packages and containers are specially designed to withstand microwave temperatures. To make sure yours is one of them, check the item or its packaging label. Only use a product in the microwave if the manufacturer indicates that it is okay to do so and be sure to follow any specific instructions provided. If neither the item nor the package is marked, use a different container.

MORE RESOURCES AND INFORMATION

- **Plastics and the Microwave**
FDA Consumer - November/December 2002, a magazine published by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration
- **Microwaving Plastic**
American Cancer Society
- **Freezing or Microwaving with Plastic: Does it Release Dioxin?**
MayoClinic.com
- **Plastics in the Microwave**
Plastics Division of the American Chemistry Council (ACC)
- **Frequently Asked Questions: Using Plastics in the Microwave**
Plastics Division of the American Chemistry Council (ACC)
- **No Link Between Microwave Cooking and Cancer, Expert Says**
Jean Weese, Ph.D., Extension Food Scientist, Alabama Cooperative Extension
- **Microwaving Foods and Dioxin Formation**
Christina Stark, M.S., R.D., Cornell Cooperative Extension
(Must be registered member of Cornell Nutrition Works website. Registration is free.)
- **More on Plastics in the Microwave**
Christina Stark, M.S., R.D., Cornell Cooperative Extension
(Must be registered member of Cornell Nutrition Works website. Registration is free.)
- **Dioxin in Containers**
Joe Schwarcz, Ph.D., Director, McGill University's Office of Science and Society
- **Perilous Plastic?**
Nada Mangialetti, Ph.D., for the American Council on Science and Health

- **How Things Work: Microwave Ovens**
Louis A. Bloomfield, Ph.D., Professor of Physics, University of Virginia

Other MythBusting Websites

- **Plastics, Microwaves, and Dioxins...OH MY!**
BreakTheChain.org
- **Don't Use Plastic for Heating Foods in a Microwave Oven Because of Exposure to Dioxins – Unproven! & Fiction!**
TruthOrFiction.com