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- Peer reviewed study exposes potentially hazardous nanoparticles in baby formula

Peer reviewed study exposes potentially hazardous nanoparticles in baby formula

January 6, 2017

Nano-hydroxyapatite nanoparticles found in Gerber, Enfamil, Well Beginnings products

OAKLAND, CALIF. — According to a peer reviewed [study](#) published in the journal NanoImpact, nanoparticles linked to potential health hazards were found in popular powdered baby formula products, including Gerber, Enfamil and Well Beginnings. The study was initiated earlier this year when scientists at the Arizona State University [School of Engineering Lab](#) found unlabeled nanomaterials in six out of six baby formulas tested, including Gerber, Enfamil, Similac and Well Beginnings. [Friends of the Earth](#) released the results of this [first-of-its-kind](#) study in a 2016 [report](#).

Nanoparticles pose novel health threats and are not regulated for health or safety when used in food and consumer products. Because of their very small size, nanoparticles are more likely than larger particles to enter cells, tissues and organs. At the nanoscale, the properties of familiar substances differ from those of the same substances in larger particle form, creating novel health risks when ingested, inhaled or absorbed through the skin. Needle-like nano hydroxyapatite particles are concerning because they could interfere with cell function. Putting this product in infant formula without adequate scientific research may contribute to unintended and initially hidden harmful health impacts in babies' developing bodies.

Friends of the Earth's 2016 [report](#) details the latest science on health risks of nano ingredients. These substances are not regulated or assessed for safety before they are allowed for use in consumer products.

"Health impacts studies on exposure to nanoparticles are few. So it is prudent to consider the potential unintended health impacts before exposing infants to them," comments Tracey Woodruff, PhD, MPH, with Professor in Department of Ob/Gyn and the [Philip R. Lee Institute for Health Policy Studies](#) at the University of California, San Francisco. "Some 'needle-like' nanoparticles could possibly penetrate cell walls and migrate to other parts of the body, or cause harm when inhaled. Much more research needs to be done to be able to assure that this infant formula tested is absolutely safe."

"For companies to use unregulated, unlabeled and potentially harmful nanomaterials in baby formula is irresponsible. We are urging federal regulators to establish clear and binding rules around use of nanoparticles in food and consumer products and demand that all companies immediately remove nanoingredients from baby formula and other foods until regulations are in place" says Ian Illuminato, senior health and environment campaigner with Friends of the Earth and author of the Friends of the Earth report.

"Many parents and caregivers have to feed their children formula," explains Kendra Klein, PhD, staff scientist at Food & Technology Program at Friends of the Earth. "It is reprehensible that companies like Gerber can expose babies to poorly studied, virtually unregulated and unlabeled nanomaterials in infant formula. Suitable alternative ingredients have been used for decades that don't carry the same risks. We are calling for an immediate moratorium on the use of nanomaterials in formula and other food until they can be demonstrated to be safe and are regulated and labeled. Formula companies must commit to not use these materials right now."

Earlier this year, Friends of the Earth and eight other groups sent [letters to the FDA](#) urging immediate removal of formulas with nanomaterials and calling for a moratorium on their use in until safety assessment, oversight and labeling are established. The coalition also sent a letter to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration advocating for better protection of workers who may be exposed to nanomaterials. The formula companies received a [letter](#) from Friends of the Earth that demands a halt to their use of nanomaterials in absence of safety assessment, regulation and labeling. Consumer advocates are also circulating a [petition](#) demanding action from the named companies.

For more information on nanotechnology, visit www.foe.org/nanotechnology/

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