

Acrylamides

World Alert Over Cancer Chemical (Acrylamides) in Cooked Food

Uhlig, Robert, news at Telegraph.Co.Uk, May 18, 2002

A worldwide alert was issued after scientists announced that much of the food we eat contains a chemical [acrylamide] known to cause cancer, damage the nervous system and affect fertility.

The Food Standards Agency said that its scientists had confirmed recent Swedish findings that **"significant levels" of acrylamide occurs in fried, baked and processed foods ranging from biscuits, bread and crisps to chips and possibly meat.**

The finding has the potential to change the way certain types of food are viewed, in much the same way that studies in the 1960s changed perception of the health risks of smoking.

Acrylamide causes gene mutations leading to a range of cancers in rats, including breast cancer, uterine cancer and tumours in the adrenal glands and the internal lining of the scrotum.

Among the products tested in the British study - some of which had levels of acrylamide **1,280 times higher than international safety limits** - were **chipped and fried supermarket potatoes, Walkers crisps, crackers, Kellogg's Rice Crispies and Pringles crisps.**

The results have so alarmed health experts that they have called international meetings to discuss what should be done.

The British and Swedish findings were presented yesterday to the Scientific Committee on Food that advises the European Commission on food safety.

World Health Organization experts will discuss the research at a special meeting in Geneva next month. It is expected to recommend further studies.

According to the findings, acrylamide forms naturally in food when it is fried or baked. The scientists believe it also occurs in roasted, grilled and barbecued food. **As a genotoxic carcinogen, acrylamide is classified as a "probable" cancer-causing chemical with no safe dose.**

Diane Benford, a toxicologist at the FSA, said: "We cannot define a safe level. We have to assume that at any level of exposure there may be some risk, albeit very small."

With 30 to 40% of cancers caused by diet, Dr Benford said that it was too early to say whether acrylamide was one of the major causes of cancer.

Dr Benford said: "We are not advising any changes of diet or cooking procedures because we do not know enough yet."

Steve Wearne, head of contaminants at the FSA, said: "It's about any food that's cooked this way. It appears that any of these cooking processes in food production can lead to acrylamide forming. It's not clear what the factors are that lead to acrylamide formation; it may be due to the type of cooking, temperature, or chemical composition of the food, or other factors."

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Our Comment:

Foods which have been highly heated (i.e. heated over boiling temperature, 212⁰ F.) and thus, contain toxic acrylamides, should avoided for those who want to enjoy excellent health and a long life.

This new evidence further supports the concept of eating some raw (uncooked) food every day as a regular part of your diet. We recommend eating at least 50% of your diet as raw food, such as fresh fruit, raw vegetables (especially raw salads), soaked nuts and seeds (soaking them neutralizes their enzyme inhibitors which can interfere with human digestion), fermented seed cheese, raw homemade kefir, etc.

Boiling Temperature is Safe. When cooked foods are eaten, they should not be cooked over boiling temperature (212⁰ F.) to avoid the formation of acrylamides. Foods heated in a microwave oven or a regular oven (which usually means temperatures between 300 – 450 deg. F) should be avoided. Examples of highly heated foods (best to avoid) are bread, cakes, cookies, buns, rolls, bagels, pizza, French fries, chips, donuts, etc.

An excellent, delicious alternative to eating most breads (typically highly heated) is to make your own homemade flatbread (using a skillet on your stove). Ask for our Flatbread recipe.