

Aluminum Cookware: A Harmful Food Additive



You eat aluminum every day. While it may not be on the menu, aluminum finds its way into our diet through myriad channels including food additives, as a leavening agent, in teas, in medicines, and as a byproduct of cooking with aluminum pans.

Aluminum has long been thought of as a safe, non-toxic metal; new research is beginning to question its safety. Aluminum exposure has been linked to diseases such as [Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, and Lou Gehrig's diseases](#). While none of these connections have been proven, it is wise to avoid any additional exposure whenever possible.

The main source of ingestion by Americans is through [food additives](#), often found in baked goods prepared with chemical leavening agents, aluminum-based food dyes and colors, and some processed cheeses. Aluminum is also found in certain antiperspirants, baking soda, antacids, some children's aspirins and many foods, especially tea.

The choice of what you cook your food in may be just as important as the food you are cooking. This may never be truer than when you are cooking in aluminum cookware. Aluminum is a fairly stable metal, until it is exposed to heat or acids; cooking often does both. Cooks should proceed with extra caution when preparing acidic foods such as tomatoes or rhubarb. Cooking with fluoridated [drinking water](#) - like tap water - in aluminum cookware also increases the concentration of ingested aluminum.

Aluminum Poisoning

True aluminum toxicity is rare and usually occurs in people who work around aluminum in some form. This does not mean, however, that a sub-toxic dose will not cause health problems. If you suspect you might have elevated levels of aluminum, you should get a hair analysis, along with blood and urine [tests](#) by a reputable lab. If you have high levels of aluminum in your body, "[chelation](#)" can help to remove heavy metals from your bloodstream and body tissues. There are numerous ways to chelate, including IV injection of [EDTA](#) (a man-made amino acid), certain seaweed extracts and other dietary and nutritional supplements (for slow, but safe, chelation), and even high dose combinations of zinc and vitamin C.

How Can We Limit Aluminum Intake?

Read food labels and try to avoid food additives. In general, the less processed the food, the better. Have your water tested, or use a good [filter](#) to protect yourself.

While you're at it, avoid or limit how often you use aluminum cookware. Silicone coated, unbleached parchment paper is a good alternative to aluminum foil. We recommend You Care's brand. It's oven safe to 450 degrees and can be used in the microwave. It can also be reused many times, saving on landfill waste.

Another option -- good old fashioned, unbleached waxed paper. Our favorite is [Natural Value](#) waxed paper and waxed paper bags.

Sources

- Savory J, et al: [Trace metals and degenerative diseases of the skeleton](#). Acta Pharmacol Toxicol (Copenh). 1986;59 Suppl 7:282-8.
- Banks WA et al: [Aluminum-induced neurotoxicity: alterations in membrane function at the blood-brain barrier](#). Neurosci Biobehav Rev. 1989 Spring;13(1):47-53.
- Miu AC, Benga O: [Aluminum and Alzheimer's disease: a new look](#). J Alzheimers Dis. 2006 Nov;10(2-3):179-201.

Third Party Links (Articles, Videos and Reference)

- For more information about aluminum toxicity, check out [TruFax.org's](#) site.
- National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences article on [Aluminum and Alzheimer's](#).

Wider & Alternative Perspectives

- The International Aluminium Institute says [aluminium is safe for cooking](#).
- For a different perspective on [Aluminium and Alzheimer's disease](#).
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Comments

March 22, 2007 - 12:27pm — [iceland0507](#)

Toss em

Okay, I'm tossing out all of my aluminum pots and pans and going with cast iron and stainless steel. I've heard this before, but you've convinced me.

March 22, 2007 - 12:23pm — [kenyakai](#)

Hair analysis

Does anyone know where to get a hair analysis?

March 22, 2007 - 12:24pm — Jim S (not verified)

Lots of Docs

Lots of chiropractors, nutritionalists and naturpathic doctors do this kind of testing

March 20, 2007 - 12:01pm — [marshallsm](#)

what about near fire?

when camping or grilling, only tin foil can handle that kind of direct heat, right? i don't think i'd trust wax paper to do that.

March 20, 2007 - 12:00pm — [noon82](#)

i cook with foil all the time

but the alternataives you mention here sound really great. i'll give them a try.

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