

## Plasticizers may lead to obesity and diabetes

Phthalates are chemical compounds used to make plastics more flexible. While most people would think that such compounds would not be found in humans, they would be wrong. Several different phthalates have been documented to be found in the urine of the average US resident. The exposures appear to come mainly from foods that have been in contact with plastics. These compounds have been shown to have endocrine effects as anti-androgens (blocking the effect of androgen hormones) leading to reduced testosterone levels. This current study looked at a total of 1,451 men who were at least 18 years of age and were measured for phthalate levels and obesity. The men were measured for their waist circumference, as a marker for obesity and tested for insulin resistance in addition to having their urine tested for seven different phthalate metabolites. Four phthalate metabolites (MBzP, MEHHP, MEOHP and MEP) were associated with men being obese and three (MBP, MBzP and MEP) were associated with insulin resistance. A dose-response was associated with these compounds meaning that as more phthalates were found the greater the obesity or insulin resistance became. Knowing that obesity and insulin resistance are huge risk factors for developing adult onset (type 2) diabetes, this study becomes quite significant. The way we handle, store and heat our foods has a lot to do with the amount of phthalates in our body. Since the phthalates are not stored in our bodies the way that DDT and PCBs are, the urinary levels reflect our current exposures. Those persons with high consistent plastic exposures gain more weight and become resistant to their own insulin. While both of these problems have been linked to diet and lifestyle, this is the first study to link a food and drink contaminant to the epidemic of obesity and diabetes. For a pdf of the original article go to: <http://www.ehponline.org/members/2007/9882/9882.pdf>

## About the Author

Walter J. Crinnion ND

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