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FDA: Safety of Polystyrene Foodservice Packaging

Polystyrene is a kind of plastic used to make foodservice packaging, such as hot and cold drink cups, as well as many other consumer goods. It frequently is **used in applications where hygiene is important**. Polystyrene is made by stringing together (polymerizing) styrene, a substance that also occurs naturally in foods such as strawberries, cinnamon, coffee and beef.

FDA Determines Polystyrene Is Safe for Use in Food Contact

In the U.S., the federal [Food and Drug Administration \(FDA\)](#) strictly regulates all food packaging materials – including polystyrene. All food packaging – glass, aluminum, paper and plastics (such as polystyrene) – contains substances that can “migrate” in very tiny amounts to foods or beverages. That’s one of the reasons why FDA regulates food packaging in the first place – to be confident that the amount of substances that might actually migrate is safe.

For every material used in food contact, there must be sufficient scientific information to demonstrate that its use is safe. FDA’s safety evaluations focus on three factors:

- the materials/s used in the packaging,
- cumulative exposure to substances that may migrate into foods and beverages, and
- the safe levels of that exposure.

Tiny amounts of styrene may remain in polystyrene following manufacture, so FDA has evaluated both the safety of the food contact material itself (polystyrene) and the safety of the substance that may migrate (styrene). The result of these evaluations: FDA for decades has determined that polystyrene is safe for use in contact with food.

In addition, FDA has approved styrene as a food additive – it can be added in small amounts to baked goods, frozen dairy products, candy, gelatins, puddings and other food.

Data

In 2013, the Plastics Foodservice Packaging Group provided [updated styrene migration data to FDA](#). The data show that current exposures to styrene from the use of polystyrene food contact products remain extremely low, with the estimated daily intake calculated at 6.6 micrograms per person per day. This is more than *10,000 times* below the safety limit set by FDA (the FDA’s acceptable daily intake value of styrene is calculated to be 90,000 micrograms per person per day).

The 2013 update is available [here](#). For additional information on this update, please email Omar_Terrie@americanchemistry.com.

For More Information:

- [Q & A: Safety of Polystyrene Foodservice Packaging](#)
- [Harvard Study: Safety of Polystyrene Foodservice Packaging](#)
- [National Toxicology Program: Safety of Polystyrene Foodservice Packaging](#)
- [California’s Prop 65: Status of Proposed Listing of Styrene](#)
- [Styrene, Polystyrene Foodservice Packaging and Prop 65 Q & A](#)
- [Sanitation and Hygiene](#)
- [Consumer, Employee and Community Information on Styrene: YouKnowStyrene.org](#)
- [Foodservice Packaging Institute](#)