FDA proposes arsenic limit in apple juice

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) today issued a proposed maximum allowable limit of 10 parts per billion (ppb) of arsenic in apple juice, the same level set by the Environmental Protection Agency for arsenic in drinking water.

The guidance is based on extensive testing of apple juice that found the overall level of arsenic was low, though occasional outlying samples contained higher levels of arsenic.

To minimize risk, the FDA released the new proposed limits, along with final results of its evaluation.

“We have been studying this issue comprehensively, and based on the agency’s data and analytical work, the FDA is confident in the overall safety of apple juice for children and adults,” FDA Commissioner Margaret A. Hamburg, M.D., said in a news release.

The Academy reminds parents that it is not necessary to offer children any juice to have a well-balanced, healthy diet. For years, the Academy has recommended limited intake of all sweet beverages, including juice, to reduce the risk of obesity and dental caries.

For parents who want to offer juice, AAP recommendations call for a limit of 4-6 ounces a day for children ages 1 to 6 years and 8-12 ounces for those 7 and older. The Academy does not recommend juice for children 6 months and younger.

While the FDA has been testing the presence of arsenic in apple juice for the past two decades, new tools have allowed for better understanding of the breakdown between organic and inorganic arsenic, the carcinogenic form.

Today’s FDA announcement of an “action level” for arsenic is considered guidance to industry. The agency takes the action level into account when deciding whether to use enforcement after a food product exceeds the threshold.

The FDA is continuing to monitor arsenic levels in rice products.

RESOURCES

- Access the FDA reports at http://www.fda.gov/NewsEvents/Newsroom/PressAnnouncements/ucm360466.htm.
- Find the AAP policy statement, The Use and Misuse of Fruit Juice in Pediatrics at http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/107/5/1210.full.
- To comment on the FDA proposed action level on arsenic limits in apple juice during the next 60 days, visit http://www.regulations.gov.
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