

HEW



NEWS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE

73- 42

(Food and Drug Administration)
LATHOM--(301) 443-3285
(Home)--(301) 365-1496

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
Friday, September 28, 1973

The Food and Drug Administration today took three actions to help better define the scientific issues and regulatory actions that might be needed to limit asbestos contamination in foods and drugs.

The actions were:

1. Issued a call for the submission of all available scientific or medical information on the effects of injection through drug use or ingestion through food and beverages of asbestos fibers;
2. Published for comment a petition from the Center for Science in the Public Interest and the Environmental Defense Fund to prohibit all asbestos residues in food and drugs; and
3. Responded to the prohibition petition with specific plans to reduce asbestos residues in food and drugs to the minimum consistent with known technologic processes for the control and measurement of asbestos.

The FDA response is based on the practical recognition that asbestos is present throughout the environment and that it is impossible at this time to eliminate all sources of asbestos contact with food and drugs. At the same time, the FDA fully supports the desirability for all possible efforts to minimize this contact.

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Present studies in animals indicate that injection of asbestos fibers (e.g., via injectable drug contamination) may pose a health hazard. At the same time, FDA review of current scientific data does not indicate clear evidence of a health hazard from ingestion of asbestos from foods or beverages.

Specific plans that the Agency proposes to reduce asbestos contamination are:

1. Establish a more accurate standard test method for determining asbestos fibers in food-grade talc. Talc, a noncaking agent, is a naturally-occurring substance which might be expected to contain asbestos. The proposed test would serve as a basis for establishing a final regulation on asbestos content in talc used in food.

2. Require that no asbestos filter be used in the manufacture of injectable drugs unless such filters are essential to production. If they are essential, an additional, non-asbestos-containing filter would be required. Exception would be allowed only if the additional filter would jeopardize the safety and stability of the drug.

Both the FDA and the consumer petition proposals appear in the FEDERAL REGISTER of September 28, 1973. Ninety days will be allowed for industry and public comment. Comments should be addressed to the Hearing Clerk, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Room 6-88, 5600 Fishers Lane, Rockville, Md. 20852.

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