

<https://www.ecowatch.com/phthalates-mac-and-cheese-2465226489.html>

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## Worried About Phthalates: 'Just Don't Eat Foods in Boxes'

A reporter asked:

I was wondering if you could share your thoughts with me about the [new study](#) finding phthalates in [boxed Mac & Cheese](#). Should consumers be afraid of just Mac & Cheese, considering [phthalates](#) are ubiquitous and found in almost every food we consume? What are your recommendations?

Here's what I said:

The moral of this story is to eat a healthy diet and you don't have to worry about things like phthalates. What is a healthy diet? It's one in which most of the calories come from relatively unprocessed fruits, vegetables, and grains, and heavily processed foods—like boxed Mac & Cheese—are kept to a minimum. The phthalate-in-Mac-and-Cheese problem is a processing issue. Phthalates leach in during processing. You love Mac and Cheese? Great. Make your own.

What's going on here?

For starters, I love Mac & Cheese, although not so much for the kind in boxes.

In case you don't know much about this dish, check out the Hartman group's [useful historical infographic](#).

As for phthalates:

- These are [plasticizers](#) in packaging with effects as endocrine disrupters.
- They have been [associated with male infertility](#).
- The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency [is concerned](#) about their toxicity and widespread environmental exposure.
- Researchers are worried about [phthalates in fast food](#) because of all the packaging and handling.

So why am I not more upset about them? They are easy to avoid. Just don't eat foods in boxes.

David Katz has an [excellent piece](#) that puts phthalates in a wider dietary context:

This whole topic represents risk distortion, and it's something we tend to do all the time. We all know, or certainly should, that [a dietary pattern](#) of wholesome, whole foods, mostly plants, is monumentally good for us. Such a diet not only minimizes bad chemicals in the food we eat, it—more importantly—minimizes bad food in the food we eat!