

Arsenic in rice - is it safe to eat?

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Tuesday, 02 October 2012 11:31



You may have recently read or heard about renewed concern over the levels of arsenic in rice and rice-based products. A recent report by the American Food & Drug Administration (FDA) has found that the levels of arsenic in rice and rice products appears to be much higher than initially thought and that these levels could potentially be harmful to your health. So should you be concerned?□

Well first off, arsenic exists in nature, in water, food, air, rock and soil so levels found in our food, bar pesticides containing arsenic, are not strictly linked to human activity and farming practices. There are two forms of arsenic, organic and inorganic and it is the latter which is of most concern as inorganic arsenic is a known carcinogen and ingestion may increase the risk of certain cancers. Rice is of particular concern as it is grown in flooded conditions and exposed not only to the arsenic in the soil and air but also to high levels in the water.

The human body is remarkably adept at coping with certain toxins which occur naturally in the foods we eat, but this is of course providing your diet is balanced and you don't consume excessive amounts of any one food - yes, you guessed it, it's all about the proverbial "Moderation".

So should we be concerned about how much rice we eat? Well, the FDA's findings are part of a preliminary report and the research is not complete yet but in this instance it would perhaps be best to err on the side of caution and look at limiting your consumption of rice and rice products to 2-3 servings per week. There's no need to cut rice from your diet completely however as varieties from California for example are lower in arsenic than varieties grown in Asia. Increasing the volume of water to rice when you cook it can also help reduce levels of inorganic arsenic. This is also the perfect excuse to try something new as there are plenty of other interesting grains you can try, many of which are gluten free such as corn, quinoa and buckwheat (don't let the name fool you).

Find out more:

- [FDA News Release: FDA releases preliminary data on arsenic levels in rice and rice products](#)
- [Arsenic and rice: update for gluten free consumers](#)

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