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## **New Congressional Report Highlights Baby Food Companies' Reckless Behavior and Flaws in FDA's Protective Limits**

*Baby food companies continue to ignore the dangers of heavy metals in their baby food, and the FDA continues to allow it.*

WASHINGTON, DC — New data from the House Subcommittee on Economic Consumer Policy shows that Walmart, Sprout, and Plum baby food brands have willingly sold products whose arsenic levels were well over FDA's 100 ppb protective limit. These companies have continued to ignore the dangerously high levels of toxic heavy metals in their baby food and the FDA's action level for arsenic.

[The Subcommittee's investigation found](#), among other problems:

- When tests by the state of Alaska revealed that Beech-Nut's infant rice cereal contained more arsenic than FDA's already-too-lax limit, Beech-Nut issued a recall but limited it to product codes associated with only two of the six samples that Alaska's testing found to be over the limits.
- Even worse: Although Gerber had two products above the limit, they took no action to tell the public or get them off the shelves.
- Plum Organics baby foods are tainted with high levels of toxic heavy metals. Plum's finished products contain up to 225 ppb inorganic arsenic — more than twice the FDA's action level.

These findings prove that even after repeated warnings and reports, companies continue to focus on profit over people. These companies have seen data that shows the danger of heavy metals in their baby foods time and again: [Healthy Babies Bright Futures' \(HBBF\) 2019 study](#) found heavy metals in 95% of baby foods, drawing widespread attention to the problem, and led to a [Congressional report](#) in February that showed that all top baby foods are contaminated with dangerous levels of toxic heavy metals.

This new data — combined with the companies' failure to take preventive action to protect the most vulnerable consumers — lays bare the need for protective governmental limits on heavy



metals in baby foods. The conclusion is simple: companies will not voluntarily make necessary changes, so the government must require them to do so.

**Guidelines are not enough. The FDA must set enforceable standards that limit toxic heavy metals in baby foods.**

Walmart has not only ignored internal standards, but in 2018, they quadrupled their allowable levels of arsenic in infant rice cereal to match the contaminant levels in their foods. Sprout requires ingredient testing for heavy metals only once a year, a testing regimen that Committee calls “the most reckless” among baby food manufacturers. And high levels of arsenic were found in all the Plum’s Super Puffs that were tested.

These actions are particularly disturbing because of the harm arsenic does to the developing brain. Children under the age of two lose over 11 million IQ points from exposure to heavy metals in food, and [HBBF data shows](#) that rice-based foods account for one-fifth of IQ points lost due to dietary sources.

“Rice-based foods like infant rice cereal are high in inorganic arsenic, the most toxic form of arsenic,” says Jane Houlihan, Research Director for HBBF. “The FDA’s 100 ppb action level is not low enough — not only must the FDA immediately lower the action level, but companies must keep baby foods with high arsenic levels off the market. It is one of the most basic action companies can take to protect children.”

The baby food industry still refuses to take necessary precautions to protect the most vulnerable consumers: babies. This report has shown the refusal of companies to follow FDA’s guidelines or test their products for heavy metals, despite knowing the clear harm to children.

“The pace of the FDA’s ‘Closer to Zero’ doesn’t get us closer to zero quickly enough,” says Charlotte Brody, National Director of Healthy Babies Bright Futures. “Every year, four million babies start to eat solid foods. The FDA’s plan to take more than three years just to finalize action levels: that’s 12 million more babies exposed to toxic heavy metals every day. Because these companies won’t take the necessary steps voluntarily, we need — and babies need — a government that keeps them safe from these neurotoxic chemicals in their food.”

To learn what parents can do to keep babies safe, [visit our fact sheet here](#).



ABOUT HEALTHY BABIES BRIGHT FUTURES: [Healthy Babies Bright Futures](#) (HBBF) is an alliance of scientists, nonprofit organizations and donors working to create and support initiatives that measurably reduce exposures to neurotoxic chemicals in the first one thousand days of development. Our efforts are inspired and supported by science and data, and designed to help restore the chance for a full life to children who would otherwise face brain-diminishing exposures to toxic chemicals beginning in utero.