



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive



BonSoy Soy Milk recall: Information for the public

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Version 1.1

Adapted from the Food Standards Agency of Australia and New Zealand

What is Iodine?

Iodine is a mineral and an essential nutrient for life. It's found in the foods we eat, air we breathe and water we drink. It is also used as a disinfectant.

Why do we need iodine?

The thyroid, a small butterfly shaped gland in the neck, needs iodine to produce thyroid hormones, which are essential because they regulate our metabolism. In children, especially young children, including the developing foetus, thyroid hormones help regulate physical and mental development.

How does iodine enter and leave my body?

Most of the iodine that enters your body comes from the foods we consume, with smaller amounts coming from the water we drink and air we breathe. The iodine that enters your body goes to the thyroid where it is used to produce thyroid hormones. Iodine is generally excreted through the kidneys in urine although very small amounts may be excreted through sweat, faeces and breast milk. The time it takes your body to excrete half of the iodine you consumed in one day is approximately one month.

Which foods contain iodine?

Iodine is found in seawater so any type of seafood provides a source, particularly seaweed (kelp). Most table salt in Ireland does not contain iodine, and iodine is not added to bread in Ireland. Dairy products, eggs and some vegetables are known to contain iodine. Milk usually has low levels of iodine. In general, the public should be aware that products or "over the counter" tablets made from seaweed (e.g. kelp) may contain a lot of iodine. Iodine is an essential element required to make thyroid hormones, however, if consumption levels exceed tolerable daily intakes, the thyroid function may be affected.

How much iodine do we need?

Iodine is a trace mineral and so we need only very small amounts. These amounts are measured in micrograms (μg). Although only small amounts are needed, we need iodine regularly because we cannot store large amounts in the body.

The recommended daily intake (RDI) for iodine depends on your age and life stage:

- Younger children (1 to 8 years) – 90 μg
- Older children (9 to 13 years, boys and girls) – 120 μg
- Adolescents (14 to 18 years) – 150 μg
- Men – 150 μg
- Women – 150 μg
- Pregnancy and breastfeeding – 250 μg

What are the health effects?

Excessive iodine can lead to hyperthyroidism or, less commonly in adults, hypothyroidism. Babies appear more susceptible to hypothyroidism following excessive iodine exposure which can occur during pregnancy from the mother's intake of iodine.

The commonest symptoms of hyperthyroidism are palpitations, fatigue, weight loss, anxiety, tremor (shaking hands), heat intolerance and loose bowel motions. Hypothyroidism is often insidious and, in mild cases, may only be detected on routine screening but it can cause fatigue, weight gain and mental clouding.

Is there a medical test to determine my level of iodine?

A simple blood test (the Thyroid Stimulating Hormone or TSH) is available to assess the health of the thyroid gland. Doctors do not routinely test for iodine. If there are abnormalities of thyroid function which are thought to be related to excessive iodine exposure, consultation with a specialist (endocrinologist) is recommended.

What do I do if I have consumed BonSoy soy milk?

Do not consume any more, and dispose of any remaining milk either down the drain or in the bin. Contact your family doctor for further advice if you are experiencing any of the symptoms listed above.

For further information, see:

Food Safety Authority: [FSAI](#)

Information for medical practitioners at www.hpsc.ie

