



Your Information
Source on Food
Safety and Farming

FAQ

Answers to all your questions about food safety and farming.

Perchlorate Frequently Asked Questions

The agriculture industry came together to work with leading independent experts and scientists to gather and review perchlorate information. Based upon what we have learned, the Alliance for Food and Farming has prepared the following information to address this subject.

What is perchlorate?

Perchlorate (ClO_4) is both a naturally occurring and synthetic chemical that has been used for over fifty years as a medicine to treat thyroid problems. It is also used as an ingredient in solid rocket propellant. Perchlorate has been found at various levels in the groundwater of 36 states. While much is known about perchlorate's effects on the body because of its medicinal use, additional research has been conducted since the mid-1990s to determine if perchlorate in drinking water or foods poses a risk for people, and, if so, at what levels.

What are the health effects of perchlorate?

The only effect perchlorate has on the body is to temporarily block iodine uptake. Perchlorate does not cause cancer and it doesn't accumulate in the body. In fact, it quickly passes through the body within hours.

There is extensive research into the health effects of perchlorate. A National Academy of Sciences Committee comprised of the nation's leading experts performed an exhaustive 18-month review of all health effects studies. Their findings were announced in January 2005. The NAS Committee stated that daily ingestion of perchlorate of roughly 24.5 parts per billion can occur without adversely affecting the health of even the most sensitive people, including infants, children and pregnant women. The NAS Committee further stated that this is "a conservative, health protective approach to perchlorate risk assessment."

Based on the NAS Committee findings, the Alliance for Food and Farming asked a University of California scientist to review the Committee's recommendations regarding safe levels for perchlorate. Following completion of this scientific review, it is clear that produce is safe and plays an *insignificant* role in overall perchlorate exposure from foods for infants, children and adults.

Further, the federal Food and Drug Administration states that there is no reason for people to change their diet because of perchlorate and this recommendation includes infants and children. "FDA has no evidence to recommend that consumers should alter their infant and children's

diets and eating habits to avoid exposure to perchlorate,” according to a statement posted on the FDA website (www.fda.gov).

The Alliance has a comprehensive analysis of the health effects studies on perchlorate available on the “Perchlorate/Special Reports” section of its website at www.foodandfarming.info. The scientific summary was developed to help the agriculture industry as well as our customers and consumers learn more about perchlorate.

Is Perchlorate Regulated?

In October 2008, the EPA announced its preliminary regulatory determination that a national primary drinking water regulation for perchlorate would not present “a meaningful opportunity for health risk reduction for persons served by public water systems.” Currently, the EPA is reviewing public comments on this preliminary determination regarding drinking water. There are no federal regulations or standards in place for food.

What is the Role of Agriculture?

The agricultural industry understands that it is our responsibility to satisfy consumers that the food we produce is safe to eat. As we reviewed the recent findings by the National Academy of Sciences, talked with health officials and university scientists and studied the available research, many of our questions were answered. We remain extremely confident that the produce we are providing consumers is safe, wholesome and nutritious.

What should consumers do?

No public health official is recommending consumers vary their normal diets or discontinue eating *any* foods, including produce, due to perchlorate. In fact, the government is urging people to significantly increase their consumption of fruits and vegetables. The United States Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recommends people consume two cups of fruit and 2 and ½ cups of vegetables per day to promote good health.

Where can I get more information about perchlorate?

More information about perchlorate is available at the following websites:

The Alliance for Food and Farming – www.foodandfarming.info

Federal Food and Drug Administration – www.fda.gov

Grocery Manufacturers Association – www.gmabrands.com

You may also contact the Alliance for Food and Farming by calling (831) 786-1666.