

How much aluminium passes through the skin? The BfR reviews a new expert opinion

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The European Commission's Scientific Committee on Consumer Safety (SCCS) published a preliminary health assessment on the intake of aluminium via cosmetic products on 9 December 2019. In the opinion, new data from studies on test persons for intake (exposure) via the skin are presented. They serve as the basis for assessing how much aluminium consumers absorb through antiperspirants. The Committee concludes that aluminium-containing cosmetic products pose no health risk and that their contribution to the total aluminium intake is low. However, aluminium does enter the human body from different sources. These include food, cosmetics (e.g. aluminium-containing antiperspirants and toothpastes), food contact materials (e.g. uncoated aluminium trays and baking trays) and pharmaceuticals.

In an opinion published in November 2019, the German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR) assessed the health risk that aluminium poses from all sources. It found that the weekly tolerable intake may be exceeded. In addition, estimates showed that aluminium absorbed through the skin can make a significant contribution to the overall exposure. At the same time, BfR stressed that important data for a risk assessment are currently lacking or are open to interpretation. This concerns, for example, the question of how much aluminium is actually absorbed through the skin.

The BfR will review the new data from the SCCS opinion on the intake of aluminium through the skin and, if necessary, undertake a scientific re-evaluation of cosmetics containing aluminium. The BfR's recommendations regarding aluminium intake remain valid until future reassessment.

Further information on the BfR website:

Questions and answers about aluminium in food and products intended for consumers (updated BfR FAQ of 18 November 2019):

<https://www.bfr.bund.de/cm/349/faqs-about-aluminium-in-food-and-products-intended-for-consumers.pdf>

Reducing the aluminium intake can minimise potential health risks (Opinion No. 045/2019 of the BfR of 18 November 2019):

<https://www.bfr.bund.de/cm/349/reducing-aluminium-intake-can-minimise-potential-health-risks.pdf>

Summary of the publications on aluminium:

https://www.bfr.bund.de/en/a-z_index/aluminium-129853.html

About the BfR

The German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR) is a scientifically independent institution within the portfolio of the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL) in Germany. It advises the German federal government and federal states on questions of food, chemical

and product safety. The BfR conducts its own research on topics that are closely linked to its assessment tasks.

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