

MINUTE NUTRITION NEWS

April 2019

What's the Concern with Arsenic in Rice?

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Last month, a news article raised concerns about the arsenic levels in rice, particularly with rice-based baby cereals. It was stated that the high arsenic levels in two specific rice-based baby cereal products would deem the product unsafe if according to European standards. Learn more about arsenic in rice, and strategies on how to limit your family's exposure to this toxin.

What is Arsenic?

Arsenic is a chemical element that is naturally occurring in our environment and therefore, found at very low (and often safe) levels in many foods that we eat. There are two types of arsenic – organic and inorganic. *Inorganic arsenic* is the form that can be a health concern. Exposure to it over time can increase risk of certain cancers and other chronic disease. In young children, it could affect brain and growth development.



What's the Problem with Rice?

Inorganic arsenic (the type that can cause health problems) is commonly found in soil and water. Rice tends to absorb arsenic more so than other crops. In addition, brown rice tends to have more arsenic than white rice because the outer layer of the rice grain is not removed. And true enough, the two baby cereal products highlighted in the article last month with concerning arsenic levels were indeed whole grain/brown rice products. *(One thing to note: the term inorganic arsenic is a chemical term, it is not related to whether the crops are organically grown or not. In other words, organic rice can still contain or absorb inorganic arsenic from the soil.)*

What Can You Do to Minimize Arsenic Exposure?

As mentioned before, very low levels of arsenic, particularly organic arsenic, is normal and safe. However, if your family eats rice often, these tips will help reduce the amount of arsenic from your rice.

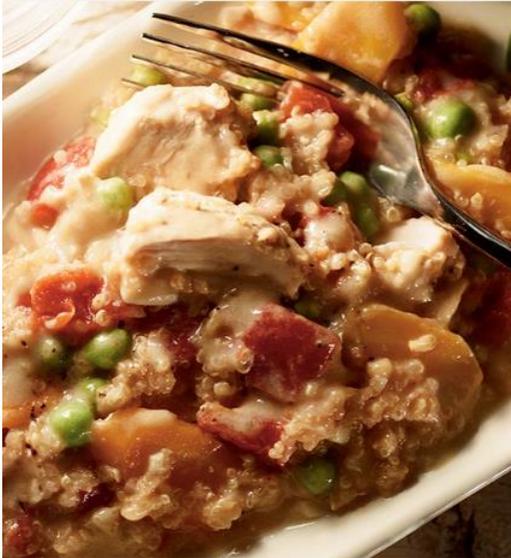
- Change up the grains. Continue to eat rice in your diet, but include other grains to change things up from time to time. Try pasta, quinoa, couscous, barley, millet, or farro.
- For babies consuming baby cereals – include a variety of cereals from different grains such as oats, barley and wheat.
- Brown rice contains many beneficial nutrients especially fibre that is removed in white rice. However, if rice is a daily staple in your household, consider changing up the variety to include basmati rice from India or jasmine rice from Thailand.
- Soak the rice overnight.
- Thoroughly wash the rice several times before cooking.
- Cook the rice like pasta – use lots of water to cook and drain off excess when finished.

Recipe of the month

April 2019

Weeknight Chicken Quinoa Stew

This stew uses quinoa as a grain for some extra protein and is great as a last minute dinner!



Makes 4 servings

Ingredients:

1 tsp	Vegetable oil
3	Thinly sliced carrots
3	Cloves garlic, minced
1	Chopped onion
½ tsp	Dried thyme and dried basil
¼ tsp	Pepper
1lb	Boneless skinless chicken or turkey, cut into 1 ½ inch chunks
1 cup	Quinoa, rinsed
2 tbsp	All purpose flour or quinoa flour
1 cup	Reduced sodium chicken broth
1 cup	Water
2 cups	Milk, heated until steaming
1 cup	Frozen green peas, thawed
1 cup	Drained canned chopped fresh tomatoes or diced tomatoes
¼ cup	Grated regular Parmesan cheese, divided

Directions:

1. In a large pot, heat oil over medium-high heat. Sauté carrots, garlic, onion, thyme, basil and ¼ tsp pepper for about 5 minutes or until softened. Add chicken; cook, stirring, for 3 minutes or until white all over. Stir in quinoa.
2. Whisk flour into broth and water and stir into pot; bring to simmer, stirring often. Stir in hot milk. Reduce heat to medium-low, cover and simmer, stirring once, for about 20 minutes until quinoa is almost tender (reduce heat to low, if necessary, to prevent boiling over).
3. Stir in peas and tomatoes; simmer, uncovered, stirring often, for 5 minutes or until chicken is no longer pink inside and quinoa is tender. Stir in half of the Parmesan cheese; season with pepper to taste. Sprinkle with remaining Parmesan if desired.

The recipe is from the Dairy Farmers of Canada, accessed on <http://www.cookspiration.com/recipe.aspx?perma=BSwbGb32veI&g=10> .

Nutrition information (per serving):

480 calories, Fat 11g (15% DV), Saturated Fat 3.5g (18%), Protein 41g, Carbohydrate 54g, Fibre 8g (29%), Sodium 410mg (18% DV), Potassium 1203mg (26% DV)