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Heavy metals from tableware

Coloured plates, patterned cups – the coatings and decorations on porcelain or stoneware tableware can contain heavy metals such as lead, cadmium and cobalt. When these are released from the ceramics, they pass into food. Data from monitoring authorities show that high amounts can be released from plates with colourful decorations. For this reason, the BfR has assessed whether the released quantities pose an increased health risk. Scientists derived this from toxicological studies. They then calculated the tolerable area-specific release quantities for lead, cadmium and cobalt. For lead and cadmium, these are much lower than the existing EU limits. Therefore, the BfR recommends lowering these limits and introducing a limit value also for cobalt. The released quantities depend on factors such as the quality of the glaze, the firing temperature, the type of decoration, the food and the contact duration. For example, more heavy metals pass into acidic foods, such as tomato sauce.

More information:
BfR Opinion No. 043/2020 of 21 September 2020

Enjoyment without plastic

The sale of single-use plastic products, such as plates, cutlery, straws, cups and fast-food packaging made of plastic will be banned in Germany as of July 2021. This has been set out in the “EU Directive on the reduction of the impact of certain plastic products in the environment”. This now calls for reusable materials. But which ones can consumers switch to without any worries? Whether glass, metal or silicone – the following applies regardless of the material: straws and tableware that are used repeatedly should be thoroughly cleaned before the first use and between each use. If possible, clean them under warm running water or wash in the dishwasher at 60 degrees Celsius. The BfR also provides regular information regarding the possible health risks of materials and their components that come into contact with food on its website. For packaging material manufacturers will find specific production recommendations in a BfR database.

More information:
www.bfr.bund.de/en > A-Z-Index: Plastic
BfR2GO 2/2020 “Bye-bye, plastic straws”



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Avoiding future risks today

Printable electronic components, lightweight elements for cars or nanocarriers in medicine, cosmetics and food – these kinds of innovative materials are known as “advanced materials”. The term describes materials that have been specifically designed as regards their chemical composition and structure and consequently have innovative properties and functions. They have great potential for application in many areas of science, technology and medicine. The BfR chairs the newly established “Advanced Materials” working group with experts from 15 authorities, institutions and federal ministries. The working group deals with potential health and environmental risks at an early stage, meaning it develops criteria and concepts for early risk detection. From the many different materials, the group aims at identifying those that give cause for concern based on specific scientific criteria. This work will support subsequent decisions regarding regulation.