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An estimated nine in 10 people have traces of Bisphenol A, or BPA, in their bodies.

Scientists found that those with high levels of the chemicals in their bodies were a third more likely to develop heart disease than those with low levels.

The findings follow similar results from a study last year and prove that they were not a blip, researchers said.

BPA is one of the world's most common chemicals, used to make everything from plastic bottles to compact discs and credit card receipts.

But it has been at the centre of controversy amid claims that it can cause developmental problems in children.

Previous studies in animals have suggested that BPA, which mimics the effect of oestrogen in the body, could cause the early onset of puberty and even trigger obesity.

In response some manufacturers have started to make products without BPA, in particular baby's bottles.

Tests carried out on more than 1,400 Americans between 2005 and 2006, as part of a nationwide study, show those with the highest levels of BPA in their bodies were 33 per cent more likely to develop heart disease than those with the lowest levels.

A study carried on a similar group between 2003 and 2004 suggested that those with large amounts of BPA in their bodies were twice as likely to develop heart disease.

However, that group had been exposed to higher levels of BPA, which could explain the difference, researchers said.

However, they warned that they did not understand the biological reason for the link between BPA and heart disease.

Prof Tamara Galloway, from the University of Exeter, a member of the research team, said: "We now need to investigate what causes these health risk associations in more detail and to clarify whether they are caused by BPA itself or by some other factor linked to BPA exposure."

She added: "The risks associated with exposure to BPA may be small, but they are relevant to very large numbers of people."

Prof David Melzer, from the Peninsula Medical School, who led the research, published in the journal, PLoS ONE, added: "This is only the second analysis of BPA in a large human population sample."

It has allowed us to largely confirm our original analysis and exclude the possibility that our original findings were a statistical 'blip'.

More than two million tonnes of BPA are thought to be produced across the world every year.

Source: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/health/healthnews/6973937/Chemical-found-in-food-tins-and-babys-bottles-linked-to-heart-problems.html>