

Traces of arsenic found in rice



A major study by Prof. Andrew Mehag of Aberdeen University has found high levels of arsenic in rice and rice products. The study was carried out for the Food Standards Agency (FSA). Arsenic is considered one of the worst cancer causing chemicals. The study found that around 10% of rice sold in the UK contains arsenic above the level China has found to be damaging to health.

The EU currently has no legal limit for arsenic in food and our own level was set in 1959, before it was known that arsenic could cause cancer. The study found that rice from France, USA, Italy and Bangladesh had the highest levels of arsenic. 30% of American rice tested had arsenic levels higher than the Chinese limit. Indian and Egyptian rice had the lowest levels. Bad news for people like me that eat brown rice every day is that brown rice had even higher levels of arsenic. Even worse news for me, some rice milk was found to contain high levels of arsenic too.

The FSA has said that in the UK, where people eat relatively small amounts of rice, arsenic is not a risk. For those of us that eat a great deal of rice, then perhaps it is a risk. The biggest at-risk group are babies. Prof. Mehag told a conference: "The majority of babyfood has relatively high levels of arsenic - the top end of the range. This is potentially harmful because they have small bodies and so it is a large proportion of rice - rice pudding, rice crackers and powdered rice." An FSA spokesperson said of Prof. Mehag's report that points out the risk of eating rice and rice products as "not particularly helpful." I suppose keeping us in the dark and letting us carry on damaging our health is much more helpful. Arsenic is also found in water supplies, which affects around 137 million people world-wide.

[Via The Telegraph]

Posted by Andrew Chrysostomou on August 30, 2007 in Food & drink, Green News