

**TODAY, 11/4, p22**

**[Reply] Styrofoam containers are safe for use**

We thank Mr Raymond Anthony Fernando for his feedback, “Health hazards from food consumption” (25 March 2013).

2 Styrofoam containers are made of styrene monomers. Residues of styrene monomers, left behind from the manufacturing process of these containers, can migrate into the food when they are placed in the containers. However, studies conducted by independent scientific bodies such as the Joint Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations / World Health Organisation Expert Committee on Food concluded that when styrofoam containers are used appropriately, oral exposure to residual styrene monomers does not result in any adverse health effects.

3 The proper use of styrofoam containers is thus crucial in ensuring safety. Boiling hot or hot oily foods should be cooled slightly, and excess oil from fried foods drained, before placing them in styrofoam containers.

4 The Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority (AVA) tests styrofoam food containers regularly to ensure that they meet our safety standards. These are similar to the rigorous standards established by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for styrene-based food packaging materials. So far, test results indicate that styrofoam containers are safe for use, when used appropriately.

5 AVA will continue to ensure that styrofoam containers meet our safety standards.

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for Chief Executive Officer  
Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority

**Original letter**

**TODAY online, 25/03**

**[Letter] Health hazards from food consumption**

Many people are unaware that hot food packed in Styrofoam boxes can cause health problems. Styrofoam contains the neurotoxins styrene and benzene, which are widely accepted to be carcinogens.

2            These toxins can leach into food that is acidic, warm, alcoholic or oily and into the environment after exposure to rain and other weather. It is critical that people do not microwave food in Styrofoam or put hot food into Styrofoam containers.

3            The health authorities should remind all food suppliers, including food vendors in markets and coffee shops, to gradually replace Styrofoam boxes with other packaging, such as brown paper wrapped with a thin plastic sheet.

4            Some health-conscious organisations use plastic boxes of a similar material to milk bottles for babies. People could be advised to buy these less hazardous boxes to use for takeaway food.

5            Another health hazard is dented tinned goods. Charitable organisations and supermarkets often give tinned goods to the needy, but if these are dented, they can be detrimental to a person's health.

6            A polyclinic doctor once advised me to stop taking dented tinned goods after she discovered that it led to my food poisoning.

**– Raymond Anthony Fernando**