



Borax (Boric Acid) Sold or Represented as Food

What is it?

Borax, also known as Boric Acid, is a colorless, salt-like substance that may also be found as a white powder.

Borax is widely used in manufacturing, fertilizers, pesticides and in pharmaceuticals. However, in some cultures, it is used in food preparation as a firming agent, meat rub, preservative, or tenderizer.

Why the Concern?

Recently, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) has received reports that Borax is occasionally being represented and sold as food in Canada.

The sale and use of Borax as a food ingredient is not permitted and is considered a violation of Section 4(a) of the federal *Food and Drugs Act*.

What are the Risks?

Health Canada has advised that Borax is toxic and poses an unacceptable risk to consumers' health.

In fact, the consumption of Borax has been documented as causing death of infants and adults.

What are the Symptoms?

Some of the symptoms of Borax ingestion include headache, fever, nausea, vomiting, and red eyes. Symptoms may appear 2 to 4 hours after ingesting Borax.

If large amounts of Borax are consumed, acute kidney failure can result, which can lead to death if not properly treated.

What Can You Do?

To prevent illness, never use Borax in food preparation. As well, if you are a retailer, do not sell it or represent it as a food ingredient, or even display it for sale on the same shelves as other food products.

If you find Borax packaging that has words or phrases suggesting it is a food (such as 'consume by', and/or 'traditional flavour') then contact your local Health Authority or CFIA office.

For more information contact your local Environmental Health Officer