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Canada

*Your health and
safety... our priority.*

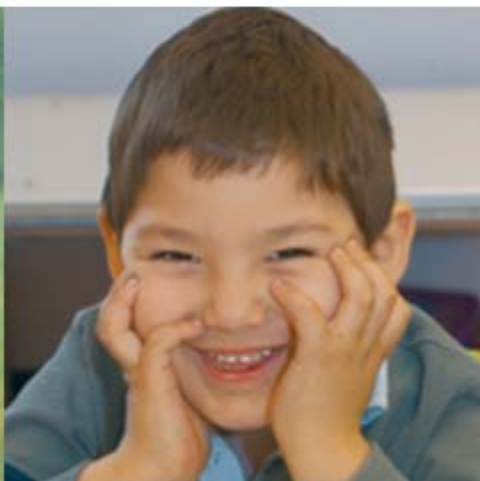
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Improving the Public Communication of Chemical-related Health Risks

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Canada

Risk Communications: The Challenge

- What best to do
- What best to say

- How best to do it
- How best to say it
- Who best to do it

Natural, Medical,
Technical Science

Social Science



Key Considerations

- Risk communications is integral to risk management
- Stakeholders are the focal point
- Decisions are evidence-based, tapping both science and social science
- Processes are transparent
- Continuous improvement through evaluation



Challenges

- Making technical information easy to understand
- Uncertainty of the science
- Values-laden
- Lens of the media



Bisphenol A Challenges

- High media interest
- Confusion and concern amongst parents/ caregivers
- Issue affects children
- Dreaded consequence (have I poisoned my child?)
- First jurisdiction to declare harmful
- Scientific uncertainty



BPA - What We Did to Communicate Risk

- Informed Chief Medical Officers of Health just prior to the announcement
- Provided a technical briefing of media immediately following the announcement
- Provided a briefing of health and environment NGOs, National Aboriginal organizations, and industry on day of announcement
- Shared information with other jurisdictions on day of announcement
- Provided plain language advice (fact sheets, web site) for Canadians on day of announcement, and later
- Established a 1-800 line with Qs and As (still continues)
- Held a public consultation period on the published draft risk assessment and proposed risk management actions



What We Learned

- Communicate, communicate, communicate
- Public Opinion Research would have been helpful to identify Canadians' knowledge, key concerns and in development of messages that resonate
- Once information gets out, your ability to control and influence depreciates rapidly
- To increase ability to control and influence the messages requires working with stakeholders before the message gets out (this isn't always possible)

