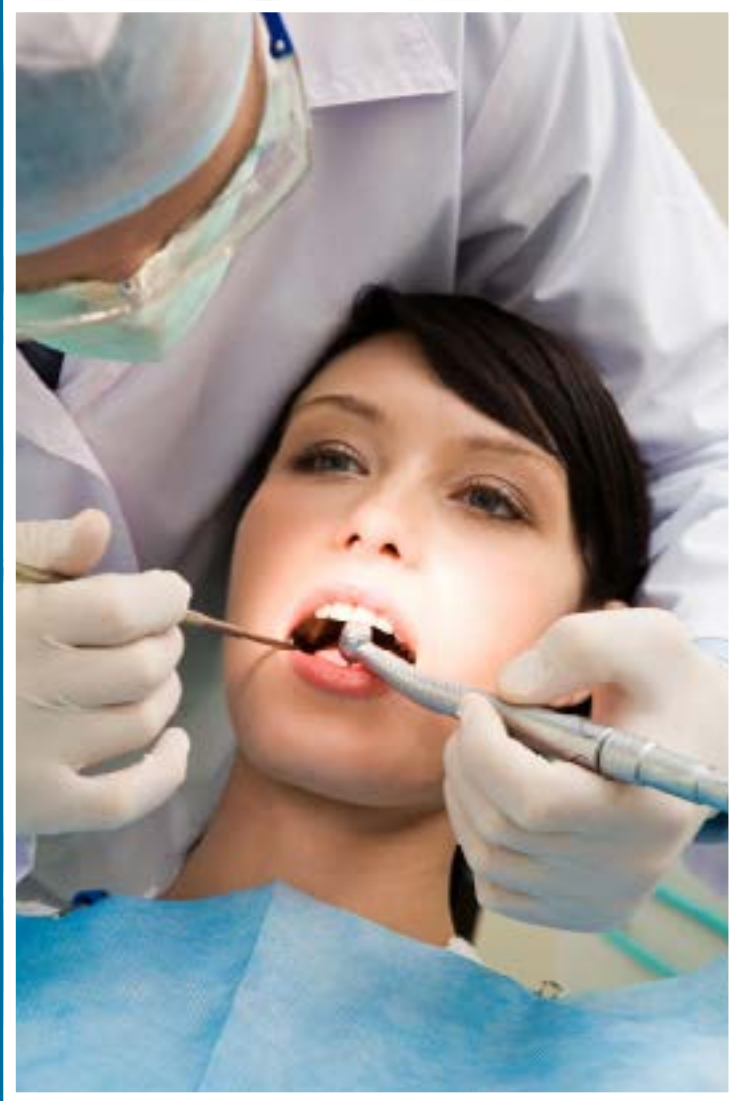


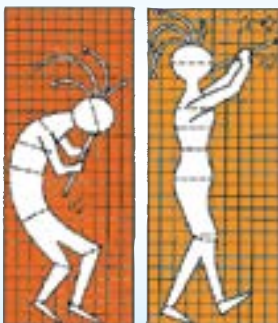
Supplement to the Tribune

Summer 2026

Health & Fitness Guide



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Is your baby's food full of microplastics?

(StatePoint) A new investigation has found microplastics in baby food pouches sold by some of the world's biggest brands — including one labeled organic — raising questions about a packaging format that has overtaken baby food aisles.

Research commissioned by Greenpeace International tested two leading baby food products and estimated thousands of microplastics in each pouch tested, ranging from more than 5,000 in one brand to over 11,00 in the other.

“Parents trust these brands to ensure their babies' first bites of food are not contaminated with microplastics. Unfortunately, this research

shows that even the most trusted brands can't guarantee that,” said Sybil Bullock, a senior campaigner at Greenpeace USA.

The findings, detailed in a new report titled “Tiny Plastics, Big Problem: The Hidden Risks of Baby Food Plastic Pouches,” point to polyethylene, the plastic that lines the pouches, as a likely source of the microplastics. Researchers also detected a range of chemicals present in both the packaging and the food, including a known harmful endocrine-disrupting chemical in one yogurt product.

This study is among the first attempts to assess the presence of microplastics and plastic chemicals that

could be released from spout pouches into baby food. It adds to a rapidly expanding body of evidence on how these tiny plastic particles enter the human body — a particular concern for infants, whose organs and nervous systems are rapidly developing. Even small exposures during these formative months can have lifelong effects on growth, neurological development, metabolism and reproductive health.

“Plastic is not innocuous, nor is it inert. Plastics are made from fossil fuels and thousands of chemicals, many of which are known to be hazardous to human health. Plastic should not be touching any food, certainly

not baby food,” says Bullock.

The two brands studied account for roughly 40% of the global baby food market. These flexible twist-top pouches have become the fastest-growing form of packaging in the category of baby food. At a time when plastic-free options are increasingly limited, and certainly not accessible to all parents, advocates say the findings cast a shadow over the entire baby food aisle.

In an effort to drive the industry in the right direction for the good of its customers and the planet, Greenpeace advocates are calling on the world's leading brands to phase out plastic pouches in favor of non-toxic, plastic-

free, reusable packaging. And because they say voluntary corporate commitments haven't gone far enough to meaningfully reduce companies' plastic production, Greenpeace is also calling on governments to

adopt the United Nations' Global Plastics Treaty, which would hold producers accountable and curb plastic pollution at the source.

To learn more and for full report details, visit <https://www.greenpeace.org/usa/hidden-ingredient-gerber->



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baby-food-microplastics. “Governments have more than enough information to apply the precautionary principle and take immediate action. Surely we can all agree that the burden of proof can't be our children,” said Bullock.

Report finds most don't know how to protect brain health

(StatePoint) Americans overwhelmingly say brain health matters deeply as they age, ranking it on par with — or even above — physical health. Yet despite this concern, most adults acknowledge they do not know how to protect or maintain their cognitive health, according to the 2026 “Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures” report and a new nationwide survey released by the Alzheimer's Association.

Eighty-eight percent of U.S. adults say maintaining brain health is very important, and almost all adults ages 40 and older surveyed (99%) say it is at least as important as physical health. However, only 9% say they know “a lot” about how to maintain their brain health. More than two-thirds

say they worry about their brain health and about developing Alzheimer's disease or other forms of dementia.

“Americans care deeply about their brain health and say that midlife is the key time to start taking steps to support it,” said Heather M. Snyder, Ph.D., senior vice president of Medical and Scientific Relations for the Alzheimer's Association. “But many don't know where to start and are looking for clear guidance on actions they can take.”

The report comes as the impact of Alzheimer's disease continues to expand nationwide. An estimated 7.4 million Americans age 65 and older are currently living with clinical Alzheimer's dementia. Total annual costs of

caring for people living with dementia nationwide — excluding unpaid care — are projected to reach \$409 billion this year, an increase of \$25 billion from 2025. Since 2000, deaths from Alzheimer's disease in the United States have increased 134%.

Despite broad awareness that lifestyle behaviors influence brain health, the survey reveals a significant disconnect between belief and action — and between brain health and dementia risk. While 75% of respondents say lifestyle behaviors such as diet, physical activity and sleep are very important for maintaining brain health, only 46% say those same behaviors are very important for reducing the risk of Alzheimer's disease and other

dementias.

Only 50% report getting at least seven hours of sleep daily or most days, 39% say they eat a healthy, balanced diet regularly, 42% engage in mentally stimulating activities such as reading or puzzles, and just 34% report regular physical activity. Nearly one-third say they exercise less than weekly or not at all.

At the same time, Americans express strong interest in programs designed to support brain health. Seventy-three percent say they would consider participating in such programs, particularly those focused on cognitive exercises (57%), health monitoring (46%), nutrition (36%) and physical activity (26%).

Many adults view midlife

— ages 35 to 64 — as a critical window for protecting brain health. Nearly two in five (38%) believe people should begin taking steps during midlife, and 46% say formal brain health programs are most appropriate during this stage. At the same time, about one-third view brain health as a lifelong priority.

Health care providers are seen as trusted sources of guidance, but conversations about brain health rarely occur. Eighty-six percent of adults would welcome these discussions during routine visits. Yet only 14% report ever discussing how to maintain brain health with their provider, and just 11% say they have talked about reducing dementia risk.

“These findings highlight

an opportunity to better integrate brain health into routine health care,” Snyder said. “People are motivated to protect their brain health, and actionable guidance can support those efforts.”

To address these gaps, the Alzheimer's Association is working with partners across communities, workplaces and health care systems to deliver research-backed resources and programs. These efforts are informed by the landmark U.S. POINTER study, which found that combining multiple healthy lifestyle habits can help protect cognitive function.

Learn more at alz.org/facts.

Root Canal Treatment Helps Protect Your Whole Body

(StatePoint) Root canal treatment is not only a tooth-saving procedure that preserves smiles and improves dental health, new research suggests that it can have far-reaching medical benefits that impact the entire body.

While it's long been known that some untreated dental infections can be associated with an increased risk of heart disease and diabetes, the positive impacts of treatment have not been as well studied. In order to understand how a successful root canal treatment can benefit heart and metabolic health, a team of researchers at King's College London tracked changes in the blood chemistry of patients who had undergone the procedure due to the common dental infection, apical periodontitis. What they discovered was improved glucose metabolism, a key factor in pre-

venting diabetes, better lipid profiles, which are linked to heart health, and reduced inflammation.

The reason that root canal treatment is so effective is that during the procedure, the endodontist removes inflamed or infected pulp, carefully cleans and shapes the inside of the root canal, then fills and seals the space. By doing so, they are stopping the spread of infection and preventing harmful bacteria from entering the bloodstream.

“When you experience symptoms of swelling or pain indicating an infection, it's important to act immediately by making an appointment with an endodontist to save your tooth and protect your body,” says Dr. W. Craig Noblett, president of the American Association of Endodontists (AAE).

Health & Fitness