

# COATING WORLD<sup>®</sup>

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SPECIAL REPORT ON NONSTICK COATINGS AND HOUSEWARES FOR RETAILERS

## What's Wrong With This Statement: "This Nonstick Coating Is FDA-Approved"?

Most of us are aware of the Food & Drug Administration (FDA), but many are not sure how such an agency functions nor precisely how it affects nonstick coatings on cookware, bakeware and appliances used in contact with food.

The answers may surprise you.

The FDA's broad objective is to protect the public from foods, drugs, and medical devices that have not been tested and proved safe for use.

New drugs and medical devices cannot be marketed until the manufacturer demonstrates their efficacy to the FDA and the FDA formally approves their marketing. After all, drugs are introduced into the body and medical devices are frequently invasive.

### What about nonstick coatings?

The FDA has no approval process for nonsticks. Nor does the FDA inspect, test or analyze them. What does it do? It publishes, circulates and updates an exhaustive set of regulations which govern the formulation, manufacture and use of nonstick coatings.

### How can you know if the nonsticks you specify comply?

The burden of compliance falls upon the coating manufacturers, who must ensure the safety of the nonsticks under the intended conditions of use. The FDA permits this self-regulation because the principal components of nonsticks (polymers) are inherently non-toxic and safe.

Nevertheless, every ingredient used in nonsticks must come from a list of substances approved for use with food, published by the FDA.

### "Compliant" vs "Approved"

If a manufacturer uses only approved ingredients, the nonstick coating you specify is said to be "FDA-compliant" because it *complies with the regulations published by the FDA*. The coating is not "approved" because

exemption". Congress has not given the FDA the authority to regulate housewares. So there is no regulation that addresses these items. But this does not mean the FDA is not interested.

### How are housewares protected?

Chemicals that migrate into food are considered food additives and therefore fall under the FDA's jurisdiction. So, every substance used in a nonstick that comes into contact with food must be

known to be safe. If a less-than-reputable manufacturer sells a nonstick adulterated with non-approved substances that could prove a threat to health, the FDA can take action to protect the public, including criminal proceedings against the manufacturer and/or seizure of the cookware, bakeware or appliances coated with the non-compliant nonstick.

### How can a retailer be sure nonstick coatings are "safe"?

All reputable coating manufacturers are willing to provide you with written documentation confirming the compliance of their coatings.

While responsible coating manufacturers would never knowingly use non-compliant ingredients, it is a good idea to double-check by asking for such confirmation in writing — especially if you are unsure of the source of the nonstick coating.

Such written documentation is something Whitford provides on a regular basis. It's peace of mind for the retailer, and added protection for the ultimate customer.



*If someone offers you a nonstick coating that is "FDA-approved", do not accept the offer until you have read what this may imply (below).*

it is not specifically inspected, analyzed and blessed by the FDA.

Anyone who represents a nonstick coating as "FDA-approved" is either dangerously uninformed or engaging in a deceitful business practice.

### "Commercial" vs "Housewares"

The FDA regulations described above apply to *commercial use* of coatings — everything having to do with food processing through packaging.

Commercial use does *not* include housewares, due to the "housewares

## What You Should Know About Alzheimer's Disease And Aluminum

**T**he controversy over aluminum cookware and Alzheimer's Disease has many people confused. Here are the facts, excerpted from "Commonly Asked Questions About Aluminum and Alzheimer's Disease", published by The Aluminum Association. Please note: This pamphlet has been favorably reviewed by the American Academy of Family Physicians.

**Question:** Can you tell me if beverages and other food products packaged in aluminum are safe?

**Answer:** Products in aluminum packages are safe. Aluminum is used in many medicines and food additives with the approval of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. Aluminum beverage and food cans have a polymer coating, so the product and package don't come in contact with each other.

**Question:** Does cooking in aluminum pans increase my exposure to aluminum and increase my chances of getting Alzheimer's disease?

**Answer:** Your aluminum cookware is safe. Research shows that very little aluminum is added to foods through cooking. Consumer Reports says there is no persuasive evidence that aluminum absorbed from cookware plays any role whatever in causing Alzheimer's. What's more, The FDA has "no information at this time that the normal dietary intake of aluminum is harmful". Similar statements have been published in the Harvard Health Letter and Clinic Health Letter.

**Question:** If aluminum products are safe, why do I keep hearing about aluminum causing Alzheimer's disease?

**Answer:** A connection was hypothesized in the 1970s, when a Canadian researcher published results of an analysis indicating that Alzheimer's victims had elevated amounts of aluminum in their brains. Subsequent research has not substantiated the initial findings; yet the perception remains.

Consumers identify with aluminum products, such as cookware, beverage cans, antiperspirants and antacids.

Aluminum is the third most abundant element in the earth's crust; in the air we breathe and the water we drink.

You should know that the Alzheimer's Association, the National Institute of Health and numerous reputable medical sources have issued statements that there is insufficient evidence to establish a connection between aluminum and Alzheimer's.

**Question:** Isn't the aluminum industry concerned about all this?

**Answer:** Yes, the industry is concerned about the tragedy of Alzheimer's and allegations that aluminum products may somehow be connected. The industry, through The Aluminum Association, has sponsored research for more than 10 years, both into the causes of Alzheimer's disease and possible connections to aluminum.

While many doctors, leading scientists and Alzheimer's researchers tell us that aluminum products are safe, the industry believes that research into the possible causes of Alzheimer's should continue until the cause and cure are found.

### Frequently Asked Questions

**Question:** "Why are most nonstick coatings dark in color?"

**Answer:** "There are several reasons for the dark color of most of the nonsticks you see.

"First, nonstick coatings are primarily organic and, therefore, subject to some staining, especially from foods such as mustard, catsup, tomatoes (which are rich in color) and

dairy products such as milk and cheese, which are high in proteins and tend to burn, leaving a discoloration behind.

"Second, any pigments used in nonsticks must be on the FDA's list of approved substances (and many standard colorants are not approved for use with food).

"Third, some pigments (yellows, greens) simply do not withstand the heat of normal cooking temperatures, tending to discolor."

Send questions with your name, address to: Fran Attilio, Whitford Corp., Box 2347, West Chester, PA 19380-0110, call (718) 967-7967 or email: [fattilio@whitfordww.com](mailto:fattilio@whitfordww.com).

#### Coming in future issues:

- The outside story: Decorative coatings and how to use them.
- A totally different kind of coating: "Soft Touch".

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