

## Microwave with care

**Avoid reheating foods in tubs and yogurt containers, experts advise**

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Mary Anne McNally has been using a microwave for about a dozen years, mostly for reheating food, but she's picky about the kind of containers she'll put in the oven.

Plastic containers, unless they're deemed microwave-safe, are a definite no-no.

"My concern about that goes back a long way," said the Montreal homemaker. "When my step-daughter had her first child, who's now 15, her mother was a chemist at the University of Toronto, and she insisted . . . that her daughter get glass bottles for her grandson.

"She did not want him fed out of plastic bottles," said McNally, adding that they were difficult to find because "plastic was everywhere. But we succeeded."

Over the years, persistent reports that some plastics could leach potentially toxic chemicals into food during microwaving lent support to McNally's concern about the ubiquitous containers.

"For instance, a yogurt container or a margarine container" are verboten when it comes to the microwave, she said. "I'll store food in that and then I'll transfer it before I microwave it."

It turns out McNally has good reason to be cautious when it comes to certain plastic containers and food wraps, scientists confirm.

Many plastic products contain "plasticizers," which allow the material to be flexible and less brittle, said biologist Rolf Halden, a public health scientist at the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health.

"There is no doubt that plastics over time will give off some of these plasticizers," Halden said from Baltimore, Md. "What people need to be aware of is that plastics are manufactured for a particular purpose. And oftentimes consumers, just out of convenience, use things for not intended uses."

In other words, those handy little tubs that once held such victuals as yogurt, margarine or pudding should never get zapped behind the microwave door -- and the same is true of take-out food containers made of Styrofoam, a substance that isn't heat-stable.

Unless a product has been tested and certified microwave-safe, it should not be used to cook or reheat food in the microwave, Halden said.

SOURCE: HEALTH CANADA



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While reheating food in the microwave is a quick, convenient way to use up leftovers, consumers should make sure the containers they use are safe.