

BfR advises against preparing food in "pop-it fidget toys"

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Colourful silicone moulds containing soft bubbles that can be pressed down are currently very popular among children. These so-called "pop-it fidget toys" are not only used for playing, but also in the kitchen, for example for baking. There are numerous instructions and videos circulating on the internet showing how these silicone moulds are used to prepare dishes such as small cakes and chocolate pralines, jelly or ice cubes.

The German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR) advises against this type of use unless it is declared by the manufacturer as intended use. Materials that come into contact with food must meet different (legal) requirements than toys. Individual investigations by the Chemical and Veterinary Investigation Office Münsterland-Emscher Lippe (CVUA-MEL) on commercially available pop-it fidget toys have shown that, in general, it should not be assumed that these products meet the requirements mandated for food contact materials. If pop-it fidget toys are used for food preparation contrary to their intended use, substances that are likely to endanger human health may migrate into the food.

With their bright colours and diverse shapes, pop-it fidget toys not only attract the attention of children. According to their main purpose, silicone moulds are toys with skin contact. Toys must remain safe when used according to their intended and foreseeable use, with due consideration given to the behaviour of children. Unless explicitly advertised, food preparation with pop-it fidget toys constitutes a type of use that is not intended by the manufacturer.

Objects that come into contact with food must be labelled with the words "For food contact" or bear specific indication of their intended use or symbols such as the cup and fork symbol, unless they are already clearly intended for contact with food due to their nature. Food contact materials are materials that are intended to come into contact with food under normal or foreseeable use or for which such contact can be reasonably expected. These materials are subject to strict legal regulations and, subject to normal or foreseeable use, must not release any substances into food in quantities that are likely to endanger human health, bring about an unacceptable change in the composition of food or impair the smell, taste, texture or appearance of food. Nevertheless, if products that are not marketed as food contact material are used for food storage and preparation, harmful substances can migrate into food in quantities that may be sufficient to endanger human health. In particular, higher temperatures, such as those necessary to melt chocolate when making pralines or in the oven when baking cakes, can facilitate substance migration from the silicone.

Initial analyses of commercially available pop-it fidget toys made of silicone by the CVUA-MEL have shown that the material used in the analysed products does not meet the requirements for food-contact silicone, as published by the BfR in its Recommendation XV, and therefore should not be used in contact with food.

Accordingly, the BfR advises against improper use of pop-it fidget toys, e.g. as a mould for ice cubes, pralines or baking, provided the manufacturer has not explicitly labelled the corresponding product.

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Further information on the subject of food contact materials is available on the BfR website:

Topic page about food contact materials: https://www.bfr.bund.de/en/health_assessment_of_food_contact_materials-528.html

BfR Recommendation XV for Silicone: <https://bfr.ble.de/kse/faces/resources/pdf/150-english.pdf>

CVUA-MEL report (in German): https://www.cvua-mel.de/images/cvua/news/beitraege/Beitrag_Pop-Ir_Fidget_Toys.pdf



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