

This Cancer-Causing Ingredient Probably Sits in Your Fridge

Attention all only-organic eaters: I'd like to have your attention in particular as you might have read this title and thought, "I bet whatever ingredient it is isn't in *my* fridge! I'm the healthiest eater I know!"

With all due respect, you might be mistaken as the ingredient I'm about to address appears in a plethora of organic products.

A few months ago, I was scanning the ingredients label on my carton of almond milk and came across a word that I still haven't the slightest clue how to pronounce: *carrageenan*. I also examined the labels of my So Delicious coconut yogurt, and my husband's Horizon chocolate milk and noticed they also contained this mysterious substance.

I figured, it's probably harmless—these products are organic!

Little did I know ...

I immediately pulled out my handy-dandy smartphone to begin investigating. It turns out carrageenan, found in many dairy and non-dairy products, deli meats, infant formulas, even flavored coconut water, has been proven to be carcinogenic. The ingredient is extracted from a red seaweed (sounds healthy so far, right?) called *Chondrus crispus*, which is popularly known as Irish moss. Companies include the extract to improve the texture of their foods.

So, how is something derived from seaweed cancer-causing? Studies conducted by Joanne K. Tobacman, a medical doctor and associate professor of clinical medicine at the University of

Illinois College of Medicine, linked undegraded carrageenan—the type that is widely used in foods—with malignancies and other stomach problems. She also discovered that it causes inflammation, and inflammation is a well-known root cause of many serious diseases, including Alzheimer's, Parkinson's and cancer.

The following is from Dr. Tobacman's testimony on carrageenan before the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB):

"Carrageenan has been used in thousands of biological experiments over several decades, because it *predictably causes inflammation*. Inflammation is well-known to be the basis for many human diseases and is associated with over 100 human diseases, including inflammatory bowel disease, rheumatoid arthritis and arteriosclerosis. Inflammation also is linked to cancer" (emphasis mine).

The next question you may be asking is why does carrageenan show up in *organic* products? According to the Cornucopia Institute, a "populist farm policy research group" according to its website, the reason is "due to carelessness by government regulators, misinformation supplied by corporate 'independent' scientists advising the USDA, and successful lobbying by carrageenan manufacturers and food processors convincing organic consumers that it's both a safe and necessary ingredient."

Unfortunately, yet not surprisingly, it seems that the NOSB continues to approve of the ingredient, despite overwhelming evidence and strong opposition, because several of the board members and the companies they represent profit from carrageenan-containing products.

If you find out that in fact your favorite milk, yogurt or ice cream features this harmful substance, you'll want to check out replacements right away. The Cornucopia Institute provides an extensive list of both carrageenan-containing foods and

those that are carcinogen-free. I encourage you to visit the link and even contact the companies that are using carrageenan to see if they might be willing to change their minds for the sake of your and your family's health.

Alternatively, the Internet has some wonderful resources to teach you how to make your own dairy and non-dairy products at home, so I encourage you to do a little research and try a recipe or two.

And one more tip before I go: If you're unfamiliar with an ingredient listed on your bottle of juice, your protein powder, your energy bar, etc., please look it up. The truth about carrageenan should serve to teach us that just because a product or company claims to be "all-natural" or "organic," that doesn't necessarily make them 100 percent healthy.

Sadly, greed, carelessness and corruption spring up everywhere—even perhaps within companies whose products bear the peaceful image of a pleasant farmstead or the benevolent face of a cow. It is up to us to make sure we're doing our absolute best to keep our whole selves—mind, body, and spirit—healthy and fit as temples of the Holy Spirit.

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