



The risks of eating bugs

Description

In the last few years, we've seen a growing push for what seems to be the destruction of our food supply. At the same time, we've seen an increasing push to get us to eat bugs. Both are marketed under the false narratives of "anthropogenic climate change" and "saving the planet."

We know the destruction of our food supply and, consequentially, access to a healthy balanced diet can only spell disaster for the human race. But how about an insect-based diet? Are insects a healthy option?

The primary advantage that's claimed for eating insects is they have a high protein content. However, food safety is a significant concern.

Dr. Sherri Tenpenny an osteopathic medical doctor specialist in Cleveland, Ohio, conducted some extensive research on the history, usage, and pros and cons of insects as a food source. She documented her findings in two Substack articles, [HERE](#) and [HERE](#).

"Most insect species are NOT edible," Dr. Tenpenny wrote. "Of the 2,100 insects that are edible, the most common are crickets, honeybees and mealworms. Globally, beetles, caterpillars, wasps and ants are also commonly consumed."

She concluded that there is very little oversight of the processing regulations within this relatively new industry. There are also serious concerns about the health of farm-raised insects and the risk to humans of cross-contamination from what the bugs eat.

Below we highlight the three categories of risk from consuming insects that Dr. Tenpenny identified.

The first warning Dr. Tenpenny gave is that **some people will be allergic to insects**. A study has shown that people who are allergic to shellfish are also allergic to yellow mealworms. Allergies to shellfish are caused by chitin. Chitin is found in the exoskeletons of insects, the cell walls of fungi, and certain hard structures in invertebrates and fish. It is probably the second most abundant

polysaccharide (carbohydrate) found in nature. It's not very digestible and falls into the category of "insoluble fibre" with the bug meal.

It has also been suggested that people with shrimp allergies could be at risk of food reactions not only to several species of mealworms, but most likely also to other insects and insect products. Also, people with known allergies to house dust mites (via inhalation) may also be allergic to edible insects like yellow mealworm, mopane worm, house cricket, and desert locust. Other insects known to cause allergic reactions include silkworms, grasshoppers, locusts and cicadas.

The second risk identified is that **insects can be a vector for microorganisms** that may pose a risk to humans and animals, either directly or indirectly. Insects can harbour pathogens on their surface, in their gut, and as part of their reproductive cycle. The full scope of the microbiota of edible insects is unknown and it is not known if these extrinsic pathogens may be harmful if eaten. It is also not known if they can be completely removed before processing. Cooking may not kill them either. For example, spore-forming bacteria in the gastrointestinal ("GI") tracts of edible bugs can withstand boiling, drying and deep frying.

The third significant concern when eating insects or insect products is the **risk of biological and chemical contaminants** carried within the GI tract of the bug. Unlike eating livestock, insects are consumed by humans and in animal feed in their entirety. Therefore, how the bugs are commercially farmed, fed, housed and processed can determine the risk within the food chain.

Insects grown on agricultural waste may be exposed to mycotoxins, pesticides and other chemical hazards like toxic metals and dioxins.

Organophosphates and chlorinated pesticides – benzene hexachloride, lindane and aldrin – were identified in edible locusts found in Kuwait. The potential accumulation of these contaminants in insects and then passed on in human food or animal feed is not known.

High levels of lead were found in dried grasshoppers from the state of Oaxaca, Mexico. The bugs were identified as the source of elevated blood lead levels during an outbreak of lead poisoning in migrants in California in 2007.

Additional concerning chemical compounds that have been found in or on edible bugs include several types of flame retardants, dioxins, mineral oil hydrocarbons, resins, plasticisers, PVCs, and aluminium.

Even processing the insects can be dangerous. When heated or cooked, the chemical-thermal reactions with the toxins on their shells or within their guts can lead to the release of toxic compounds that accumulate in the protein meal.

Featured image: [If we want to save the planet, the future of food is insects](#), The Guardian, 8 May 2021

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