

The Gear Junkie: Water bottles go to copolyester in wake of recent BPA concerns

By **STEPHEN REGENOLD**
The Gear Junkie

BPA has been in the news again. That's short for bisphenol A, a controversial compound found in polycarbonate plastics that some studies have shown mimics the hormone estrogen and can cause medical ills in lab rats.

A new study and a continuing push by anti-BPA groups prompted several health-related organizations earlier this year to call for a moratorium on BPA, which is widely used in baby bottles.

For outdoorsy types, the fuss has been over water bottles, namely of the translucent type made by Nalgene Nunc International, which employs BPA-containing polycarbonate in its ubiquitous 16- and 32-ounce cylindrical bottles.

But last week Nalgene (www.nalgene-outdoor.com) announced a BPA-free line that embodies the characteristics that made its polycarbonate bottles so popular: The company's Everyday bottles are made with copolyester, a clear and colorful material that is seemingly a cousin to polycarbonate - just without the BPA.

The copolyester bottles - which come in three styles, starting at \$8.25 - are strong and leak-proof. Drop one from head height onto rocks and it will most likely survive, not an ounce of liquid escaping. The Everyday bottles are dishwasher safe and made to withstand temperatures from minus-40 to 212 degrees Fahrenheit.

Nalgene still makes its polycarbonate line, which does contain "traces of BPA," according to a spokesperson. But the company stands by its long-time claim that these bottles are safe.

Though Nalgene is getting all the attention this week, CamelBak (www.camelbak.com) was actually first in the copolyester game. The company announced its Better Bottle line - also polycarbonate-like vessels that do not contain BPA - a couple months back.

Starting at \$8, the CamelBak Better Bottle comes in three versions, including 0.5-, 0.75- and 1-liter sizes. In May, a new Better Bottle will launch with a flip-open valve that distributes liquid via the bite-and-sip method first encountered on the company's hydration-bladder backpacks.

Like Nalgene, Camelbak markets its water bottles to hikers and outdoors users as well as the general water-toting public. Both companies offer the copolyester bottles in multiple translucent colors, your water tinted inside and sloshing in a solid - and BPA free - container.

Stephen Regenold writes The Gear Junkie column for several U.S. newspapers; see www.thegearjunkie.com for video gear reviews, a daily blog, and an archive of Regenold's work.

