



Chair: Joanne Gordon

Tel: 01246 380415

Email: joanne.gordon@asbestosupport.co.uk

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Heath Alert: Asbestos in Baby Powder

The Asbestos Victims Support Groups Forum UK (the Forum) – an umbrella group representing groups supporting UK asbestos victims – has today alerted UK Ministers about the serious health hazard posed by the ongoing sale of talc-based baby powder in the UK; this product is widely believed to contain asbestos fibers and to have caused thousands of cancers amongst users in North America.¹

Last week the American pharmaceutical multinational Johnson & Johnson (J&J) announced it was withdrawing this product from sale in the U.S. and Canada, once current stocks were gone. Whilst this is good news for North Americans, J&J's toxic baby powder will continue to be sold in the UK and other markets. Both the talc-based baby powder and J&J's safer cornstarch-based baby powder are available in UK shops and via online outlets; it is unlikely that consumers will be aware of the differences between the two or will know about the potential hazards posed by using J&J's talc-based baby powder on their babies.

Reflecting on the unsatisfactory situation being faced by UK consumers, Joanne Gordon, Chair of the Forum, expressed the Forum's concerns when she asked:

“Would busy UK families be aware of the controversy over the continuing sale of J&J's toxic talc-based baby powder or be in the position to make an informed choice about the risks posed by using a product that might contain asbestos fibres? Johnson and Johnson is a long established company that many people will trust, yet they are acting

¹ The Ministers written to were: Edward Argar, Minister of State at the Department of Health and Social Care, Matt Hancock, Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, Vicky Ford, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families and Elizabeth Truss, Minister for Women and Equalities.

in a deplorable manner in prioritising the health of North Americans and neglecting that of people overseas. Human life is sacrosanct. If the company is unable or unwilling to protect the health of all its customers, then government action is called for.”

Observers have suggested that the timing of J&J’s withdrawal of talc-based baby powder from North American markets during the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic was not coincidental. The company may very well have hoped that its contentious actions would go unnoticed. The Forum, is, however, in contact with like-minded groups in Europe and further afield, all of which are determined to hold this pharmaceutical Goliath to account for its immoral and potentially fatal actions.

Notes for Editors

1. For further information, please email: Joanne Gordon:
Joanne.Gordon@asbestosupport.co.uk
2. For more information on the Forum please see facebook page
Asbestos Victims Support Groups' Forum UK