

Cadmium in the Maternal Diet - Introduction

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1. The Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN) last considered maternal diet and nutrition in relation to offspring health in its reports on 'The influence of maternal, fetal and child nutrition on the development of chronic disease in later life' (SACN, 2011) and on 'Feeding in the first year of life' (SACN, 2018). In the latter report, the impact of breastfeeding on maternal health was also considered. In 2019, SACN agreed to conduct a risk assessment on nutrition and maternal health focusing on maternal outcomes during pregnancy, childbirth and up to 24 months after delivery; this would include the effects of chemical contaminants and excess nutrients in the diet.
2. SACN agreed that, where appropriate, other expert Committees would be consulted and asked to complete relevant risk assessments e.g., in the area of food safety advice. This subject was initially discussed by the COT during

the horizon scanning item at the January 2020 meeting with a scoping paper being presented to the Committee in July 2020. This included background information on a provisional list of chemicals proposed by SACN, which was subject to change following discussion by COT who would be guiding the toxicological risk assessment process: candidate chemicals or chemical classes can be added or removed as the COT considered appropriate. The list was brought back to the COT with additional information in September 2020 where it was agreed that papers on a number of components, including cadmium, should be prioritised for review.

3. The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), previously Public Health England, have produced information for the general public on the risk of exposure to cadmium but there are currently no Government dietary recommendations for the maternal diet that relates to this metal.