Johnson & Johnson Ends North American Sales of Talc-Based Baby Powder

The company has been besieged with lawsuits from people who claim that the product caused their cancer.

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Johnson & Johnson has decided to stop selling talc-based baby powder in North America, The New York Times reports.

The company, which will still sell corn starch–based baby powder in the North American market, has been besieged with 19,400 lawsuits from individuals who claim that the talc-based product caused their cancer. The theory is that talc can become contaminated with asbestos, which is known to cause cancer.

Most of the cases have involved women with ovarian cancer, although some have involved people with the lung disease mesothelioma, which is closely tied with asbestos.

Thus far, some cases have been decided in the plaintiffs' favor, including one that awarded $4.7 billion to 22 women in 2018. Johnson & Johnson has won other cases.

The company has repeatedly claimed that findings indicating that talc-based baby powder was contaminated with asbestos were the result of flaws in the process of scientific inquiry.

One recent large study found no strong link between talcum powder and ovarian cancer.

Johnson & Johnson has asserted it will continue to vigorously defend itself in court. It will also still sell talc-based baby powder outside of North America.

"Johnson & Johnson remains steadfastly confident in the safety of talc-based Johnson's Baby Powder," the company stated in a press release. "Decades of scientific studies by medical experts around the world support the safety of our product. We will continue to vigorously defend the product, its safety and the unfounded allegations against it and the company in the courtroom. All verdicts against the company that have been through the appeals process have been overturned."

Check out the Cancer Health article “Baby Powder and Cancer: What’s the Risk?”

To read the New York Times article, click here.

To read a Johnson & Johnson press release on the matter, click here.

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