

# Asbestos Concerns with *Johnson & Johnson* Talc-Based Baby Powder: **THE PROBLEM AND THE GLOBAL NGO RESPONSE**

**B** On May 19 2020, Johnson & Johnson announced it would discontinue selling its talc-based J&J Baby Powder in the U.S. and Canada, while allowing existing inventory to be sold in stores until it runs out.

**J&J's announcement is thought to be driven by:**

↓ a decline in sales and growing **consumer outrage** over the asbestos-cancer link

**K** **The company also said it plans to continue selling the talc-based product GLOBALLY.**

⚠ the documented **presence of asbestos** in some J&J baby powder

## **WHAT'S THE DEAL WITH TALC?**

**O** Talc can become contaminated by asbestos when it is mined because naturally occurring veins of asbestos can run through talc deposits.

**U** From at least 1971 to the early 2000s, the company's raw talc and finished powders sometimes tested positive for asbestos, **and that although the company knew about the problem they failed to disclose it to regulators or the public.**

**C** Documents produced during J&J litigation revealed the company **KNEW since the late 1950s** that the talc used in its Baby Powder was sometimes contaminated with asbestos, **known to cause ovarian cancer and mesothelioma.**

Internal J&J documents show the company *aggressively marketing* its talc-based baby powder to **African American** and **Latinx women** **DESPITE** its knowledge of the product's link to **ovarian cancer.**

As of March 2020, Johnson & Johnson was facing nearly **20,000 lawsuits** related to its talc-based baby powder.

In late June, a Missouri appellate court awarded a **\$2.1 BILLION** settlement to plaintiffs who claimed that **J&J's talc-baby powder product caused their ovarian cancer.**

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In June, J&J's CEO released a statement, pledging to address racism and to stand in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement, which is a stark contrast to its *continued targeting* of Black communities with **predatory marketing** of products linked to cancer.

The health care giant's decision to halt sales of J&J Talc-based Baby Powder in North America will protect only one small part of the world. We are calling on **J&J to immediately stop sales of its talc-based baby powder globally**, and **to recall and safely dispose of existing inventory**, to protect consumers in every country where it does business from the **serious health risks** associated with exposure to its potentially asbestos-contaminated talc-based baby powder.

On July 8, a letter was sent by **Black Women for Wellness (BWW)** to J&J, signed by more than 170 NGOs from around the world urging the corporate giant to commit **to stop selling their talc-based baby powder globally and to voluntarily recall - and safely dispose of - any existing inventory of their product in order to protect consumers everywhere** from the potential, serious adverse health effects presented by asbestos- contaminated talc ranging from ovarian cancer to mesothelioma. J&J responded 3 days with an email that was dismissive, and ignored most of the important issues raised by BWW's letter.

As a result of *J&J's REFUSAL to take the BWW and its global coalition's concerns seriously*, this campaign will launch a week of global action against J&J beginning August 31, 2020. There are now 195 NGOs representing **50 countries** from throughout the world who have signed onto a second letter that will be sent to J&J reiterating our shared concerns.

A social media and digital organizing kit is translated into French, Spanish and Arabic and distributed to our North American and Global partners to prepare for the global week of action calling on J&J to **immediately stop sales of their talc-based baby powder in every market they serve around the world.**

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Despite J&J's announcement that they would stop selling its iconic talc-based baby powder in North America, **the company has a global supply chain and distribution network that continues to mine, grind, mix, package and ship its talc-baby powder around the world.**

J&J has **six production hubs** worldwide for talc-based baby powder:

- São José dos Campos, São Paulo, Brazil which supplies Brazil and Paraguay
- Cali, Colombia which supplies the Americas, Europe and the Middle East.
- Baddi, Himachal Pradesh, India which supplies South Asia.
- Mulund, Mumbai, India which supplies South Asia.
- Parañaque City, Philippines which Supplies the Philippines.
- East London, South Africa which Supplies sub-Saharan Africa.



Talc mixed and packaged in these plants originates from mines in **China** (Guiguang Talc), **India** (Golcha Group), and **Brazil** (IMI Fabi).

Golcha and IMI Fabi operate grinders in India, **Thailand**, and Brazil, that supply milled talc to J&J.

In addition, Imerys Talc has a grinding operation in Houston, **Texas**, that mills talc from China, and ships it to J&J's **Colombia** hub.

Our research also found that J&J is donating talc-based baby powder to mothers in **Bangladesh** and India.

For more information please visit -  
[www.womensvoices.org/JNJKnew](http://www.womensvoices.org/JNJKnew)

