

What if my baby eats newspaper?

Our 10-month old son has joined the debate over whether news on tablets is better than printed news. I prefer he eat the printed news, but he seems to appreciate the benefits of both. To explain what I'm dealing with I first need to cover our daily routine.

My mornings begin with a cup of coffee and the newspaper. Because the *New York Times* can weigh as much as four pounds, my initial foray into its contents produces a crinkle so loud it stops my baby in his tracks, halting whatever destruction he's wreaking to pitter patter straightaways to my LazyBoy. I quickly discard the style section his way – otherwise he'd be in my lap grabbing the whole of it. His joy with unwrapping, twisting and flailing the news print is beyond comprehension, although the ink on his hands and mouth should make me more cautious.

I go on reading without concern.

Later on I grab my iPad to check Facebook and he crawls into my lap, swiping and pinching at the screen like he were born to browse. As parents we're amazed by the [seemingly innate ability children have for technology](#) and their fixation to all that glows. It's also quite annoying and often [dangerous](#) to have them grabbing and chewing up our electronic readers. (The jury is still out on whether computer tablets emit enough radiation to cause harm.) At least with the newspaper I can toss him a section and get on with my own – on the tablet my kid won't leave me alone.

But is playing with newspaper (and occasionally eating it) safe?

Well ... mostly. There are two basic ways a baby comes into contact with newspaper and its ink – absorption through the skin or ingestion. An Ohio State University [study](#) found little threat of dermal absorption of ink once the ink is dry, despite that messy hue that can cover fingers, arms and faces. While a mess, the ink is harmless on the skin. Eating it is a little less desirable. Lead in ink was banned by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in 1985, so today's printed word is comprised primarily of carbon, which is benign when swallowed. Nonetheless, [experts](#) at Cornell University warn that glossy magazines may use "heavy metal based inks." As much as it might sound cool to rock the heavy metal, it's best not to let your kids chew on that *Rolling Stone*. Perhaps we shouldn't throw babies the funny pages either.

Anyone with a green thumb knows that newspaper doesn't compost quickly, so it's a safe bet that eating paper will deliver it undigested on the other end. Just [ask the mom](#) who's two-year old pooped out a note card. The "paper" is primarily lignin, a fibrous wood substance found in the cell walls of plants, but not a good source of fiber for the little one.

We shouldn't be too concerned with kids who love news print. After all, theirs might be the last generation to enjoy it. Most people believe electronic tablets will eventually make printed news a thing of the past.