

Johnson & Johnson Continues to Sell and Market Talc-Based Baby Powder in the U.S. and Worldwide

Research Brief for Black Women for Wellness
October 2021

The Company will wind down the commercialization of talc-based Johnson's Baby Powder in the U.S. and Canada in the coming months. Existing inventory will continue to be sold through retailers until it runs out.

Johnson & Johnson public statement
May 19, 2020.¹

Update, New Findings

1. A powder bottling plant in the United States, in Royston, Georgia, continued to produce J&J brand talc-based baby powder months after the company's announcement that it would sell only "existing inventory."
2. J&J's plant near Bangkok, Thailand, has emerged as a major supplier of talc-based baby powder sold in the U.S. and worldwide.
3. Low-quality talc from China is the main source for J&J products currently sold in the U.S. and worldwide.
4. Johnson's Baby "Classics" Amazon storefront offers talc-based baby powder to consumers in the U.S. and worldwide.
5. J&J talc-based baby powder is stored in Amazon warehouses throughout the U.S. for sale to U.S. customers. Talc-based baby powder continues to be marketed to communities of color as the image displayed on their Amazon storefront shows.

¹ <https://www.inj.com/our-company/johnson-johnson-consumer-health-announces-discontinuation-of-talc-based-johnsons-baby-powder-in-us-and-canada>

About this Report

Material Research L3C is a charitable and educational low-profit company that investigates publicly important issues, primarily for non-profit organizations and journalists.

In August 2020, Material Research prepared a research brief in [English](#) and [Spanish](#) for Breast Cancer Prevention Partners that identified key companies involved in Johnson & Johnson's talc-based baby powder supply chain. One year later, Black Women for Wellness hired Material Research to update this brief.

Material Research examined trade records in the Datamyne commercial database. Datamyne provides detailed information about shipments to and from the United States, Colombia, India, Thailand, and many other countries. All trade data in this brief are drawn from this database unless otherwise cited.

To find information about the current supply chain, Material Research purchased bottles of talc-based J&J baby powder on Amazon for delivery to a U.S. residence. Several purchases (summarized below) were made in May and June 2021. Although labels vary in the details they provide, the data retrieved from them did provide important tracking information. Bottling dates were either stated on the label or estimated by subtracting three years from the expiration date; J&J states that its baby products are good for three years after manufacture if stored at room temperature.² Baby powder bottling plant locations and their sources of talc sometimes were determined by looking at the label's lot number and other information. Photos of the purchased bottles and labels are included in the Appendix.

Summary of J&J Talc Baby Powder Products Bought on Amazon in May and June 2021

Order date	Online platform	Bottled in	Talc source	Expiration date
June 18, 2021	J&J Baby Classics Storefront on Amazon. Shipped direct from Amazon warehouse.	Royston, Georgia, U.S. (per lot number 30119RA)	China	October 2023 (on plastic wrap label)
June 18, 2021	J&J Baby Classics Storefront on Amazon. Shipped direct from Amazon warehouse.	Royston, Georgia, U.S. (per lot number 26919RA)	China	October 2023 (on plastic wrap label)
June 25, 2021	J&J Baby Classics Storefront on Amazon. Shipped direct from Amazon warehouse.	Royston, Georgia, U.S. (per lot number 24219RA)	China	Not listed
June 18, 2021	J&J Baby Classics Storefront on Amazon. Shipped direct from Amazon warehouse.	Bangkok, Thailand	China	Not listed.
June 8, 2021	Amazon Baby "Skin Care - Powders" platform. Shipped by seller, not Amazon.	Bangkok, Thailand	Not listed	July 2023 (Bottled on July 29, 2020)
June 8, 2021	Amazon Baby "Skin Care - Powders" platform. Shipped by seller, not Amazon.	Bangkok, Thailand	Not listed	Not listed.

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Royston, Georgia - Pharma Tech Industries Plant

Finding 1: A blending & bottling plant in the United States, in Royston, Georgia, continued to produce J&J brand talc-based baby powder months after the company's announcement that it would only sell "existing inventory."

Labels on some bottles shipped by Amazon identify that J&J was still manufacturing talc-based baby powder in the U.S. at least through October 2020, five months after the company's announcement it would cease.

Two J&J talc baby powder bottles delivered to a U.S. address in June 2021 were labeled with the expiration date of October 2023. By J&J's definition, this means they were manufactured in October 2020. A third bottle of similar origin did not include an expiration date label.

Other information on the three similar bottles revealed they were made at a blending and packaging plant in Royston, Georgia, owned by Pharma Tech Industries (PTI).³

PTI bought the Royston plant from J&J in 2005.⁴ Most of the 260,000 square foot facility has remained devoted to J&J baby powder production.⁵ The PTI Royston plant is identified in legal cases as a manufacturer of J&J talc-based baby powder.⁶ The plant also blends corn starch-based products.

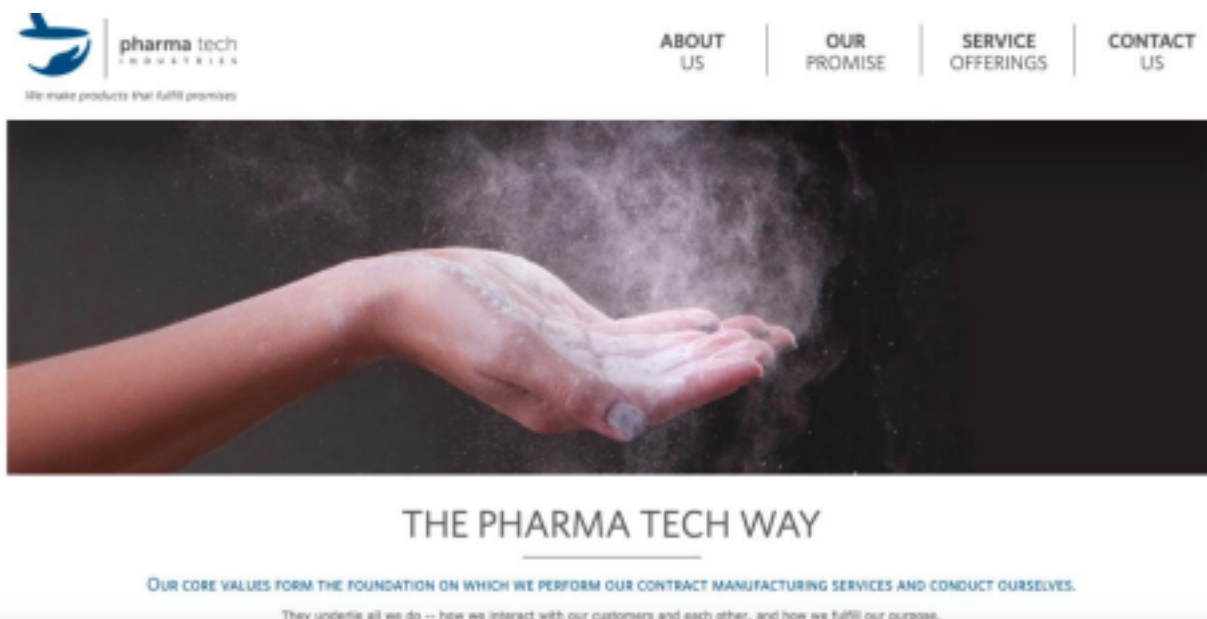


Image 1. [Pharma Tech Company Values](#), July 2021.

³Lot numbers on the lip of the bottle end in a two-letter combination ("RA") that is unique to the Royston plant. See pages 64-71,

<https://www.docketbird.com/court-documents/Johnson-Johnson-Talcum-Powder-Products-Marketing-Sales-Practices-and-Products-Liability-Litigation/AGREED-ORDER-AND-STIPULATION-regarding-the-Johnson-Johnson-Defendants-Production-of-Talcum-Powder-Products-and-Talc-Samples-Signed-by-Judge-Freda-L-Wolfson-on-1-31-2018/njd-3:2016-md-02738-04032>

⁴ <https://www.pharma-tech.com/assets/pdf/case-study-jj-transfer-v5.pdf>

⁵ <http://hartcountygga.gov/econdevpharmatech.html>

⁶ http://www.asbestosandtalco.com/juliepier/JuliePierVol3_14.PDF

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The Royston plant's talc supply comes by train from a mill in Houston.⁷ This mill is now owned by Magris Resources (formerly Imerys, Luzenac, and RTM). Further research is needed to determine whether talc is still being delivered to the Royston plant, or if it has fully converted to corn starch-based manufacturing.

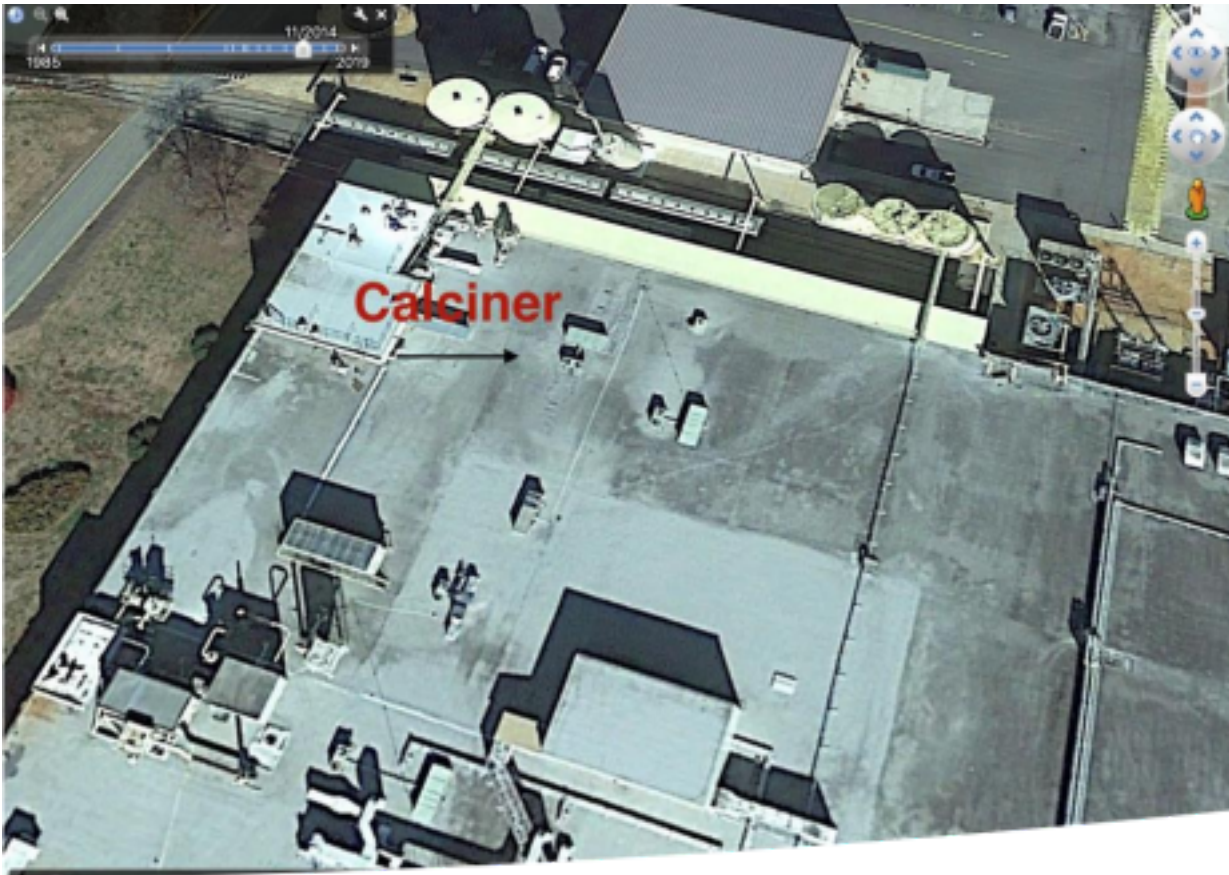


Image 2. Satellite photo of PTI's plant in Royston, Georgia. Railcars bearing talc from China are seen at top. The Calciner (a high-heat machine used to powderize talc) is identified by Material Research on a Google Earth photo (2014).

Bangkok, Thailand - J&J blending/bottling plant

Finding 2: J&J's plant near Bangkok, Thailand, has emerged as a major supplier of talc-based baby powder sold in the U.S. and worldwide.

Three J&J talc-based baby powder bottles, obtained in June 2021 via Amazon, originated in J&J's Bangkok, Thailand manufacturing plant. One of the bottles was acquired through the J&J Baby Classics storefront and was shipped directly from an Amazon warehouse. The other two were acquired from other Amazon storefronts, and shipped directly by the sellers, not by Amazon workers.

⁷ <http://asbestosandtalco.com/Egilman%20Deposition%20Exhibits%2003.06.2018/Egilman%20249.pdf> (pages 10, 47, and 69)

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The product that J&J blended in Thailand, acquired from the J&J storefront, is of particular interest. It is packaged in ounces, rather than grams. This indicates that it was made for the U.S. market, not customers in Asia or the rest of the world where metric is the standard measure. Product information on the bottle is nearly identical to bottles from Royston, Georgia, with the addition of U.S. based contact phone numbers.

The Bangkok plant (Johnson & Johnson (Thailand) Ltd., 106 Moo 4, Latkrabang Industrial Estate, Chalongkrung Road, Bangkok) has become a central hub in the global distribution of J&J baby powder. Trade records reveal a surge in shipments from this plant. Shipments to the U.S. began in 2019 (17 metric tons), increased to 574 metric tons in 2020, and exceeded 506 tons in the first half of 2021.⁸

Similarly, J&J Middle East (based in Pakistan) imported 157 tons of J&J products from Thailand in 2019 and 840 tons in 2020. The two bottles from Thailand that were measured in grams rather than ounces were distributed via J&J subsidiaries in Germany and Singapore/Malaysia, further indicating the global reach of products from this facility.



Image 3. Google Street View of Johnson & Johnson packaging plant in Bangkok, 2021.

⁸ Note: shipping manifests describe these shipments as “aloe & lavender” versions of baby powder, which is not the description for bottles obtained through Amazon. Aloe & lavender versions are usually corn starch based.

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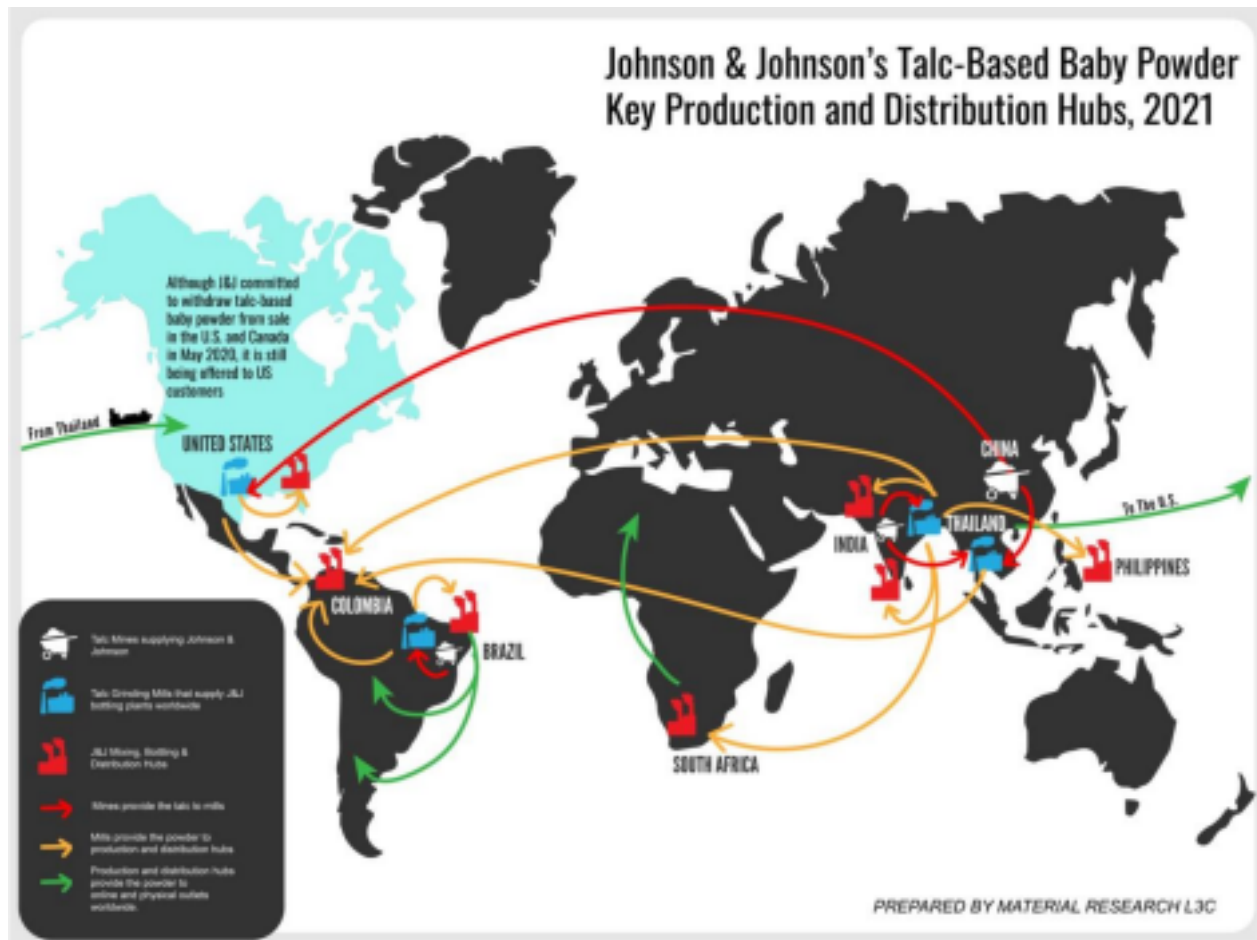




Image 4. Nearly identical product information on bottles from Royston, Georgia (right) and Bangkok, Thailand (left) indicates that the Bangkok product was packaged for the U.S. market, as does the product size (ounces rather than grams). Material Research L3C photos, 2021.

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J&J's Talc Source: Guiguang Zhizh Mine, China

Finding 3: Low-quality talc from a mine in China is the main source for J&J products currently sold in the U.S. and worldwide.

The four bottles from Royston and Bangkok packaged for the U.S. market all were labeled as containing “talc made in China.” J&J’s only known approved source of talc in China is a Guiguang Talc Development mine in Long Sheng County, Guangxi Province.⁹

The Guiguang Zhizh mine supplied the former Imerys/now Magris Resources mill in Houston, Texas, that supplies J&J.

“Since 2006, Imerys has issued a materials safety data sheet in relation to its talc sold to Johnson & Johnson that includes a warning for ovarian cancer.”¹⁰

Rio Tinto Minerals has described the talc from the Guiguang Zhizh mine as being of “less quality” than other sources. “J and J has reverted to its previous position of a preference to purchase talc based on cost as opposed to quality and is not interested in maintaining high standards for the personal care industry worldwide,” reads a 2011 internal memo.¹¹

A company official worried, “if there are quality complaints or public scandals of their use of these (inferior quality) products, the likely response will be to formulate talc out completely and a further black mark for all talc in the public forum.”¹²

A 2016 memo lists three packaging locations that use talc from Guiguang Zhizhu: PTI in Georgia, J&J Consumer in China, and J&J Consumer in South Africa.¹³ As packaging for new products on the market reveals, the Bangkok plant has shifted its talc sourcing from its prior source (Golcha in India) to Guiguang Zhizhu in China.

⁹ <http://asbestosandtal.com/Egilman%20Deposition%20Exhibits%2003.06.2018/Egilman%20249.pdf> (p. 27) ¹⁰ <https://www.docketbird.com/court-documents/Johnson-Johnson-Talcum-Powder-Products-Marketing-Sales-Practices-and-Products-Liability-Litigation/Exhibit-B051/njd-3:2016-md-02738-09867-025>

¹¹ Rio Tinto Minerals. Internal Memorandum. asbestosandtal.com, 2011, <http://asbestosandtal.com/Egilman%20Deposition%20Exhibits%2003.06.2018/Egilman%20249.pdf>. (p. 12)

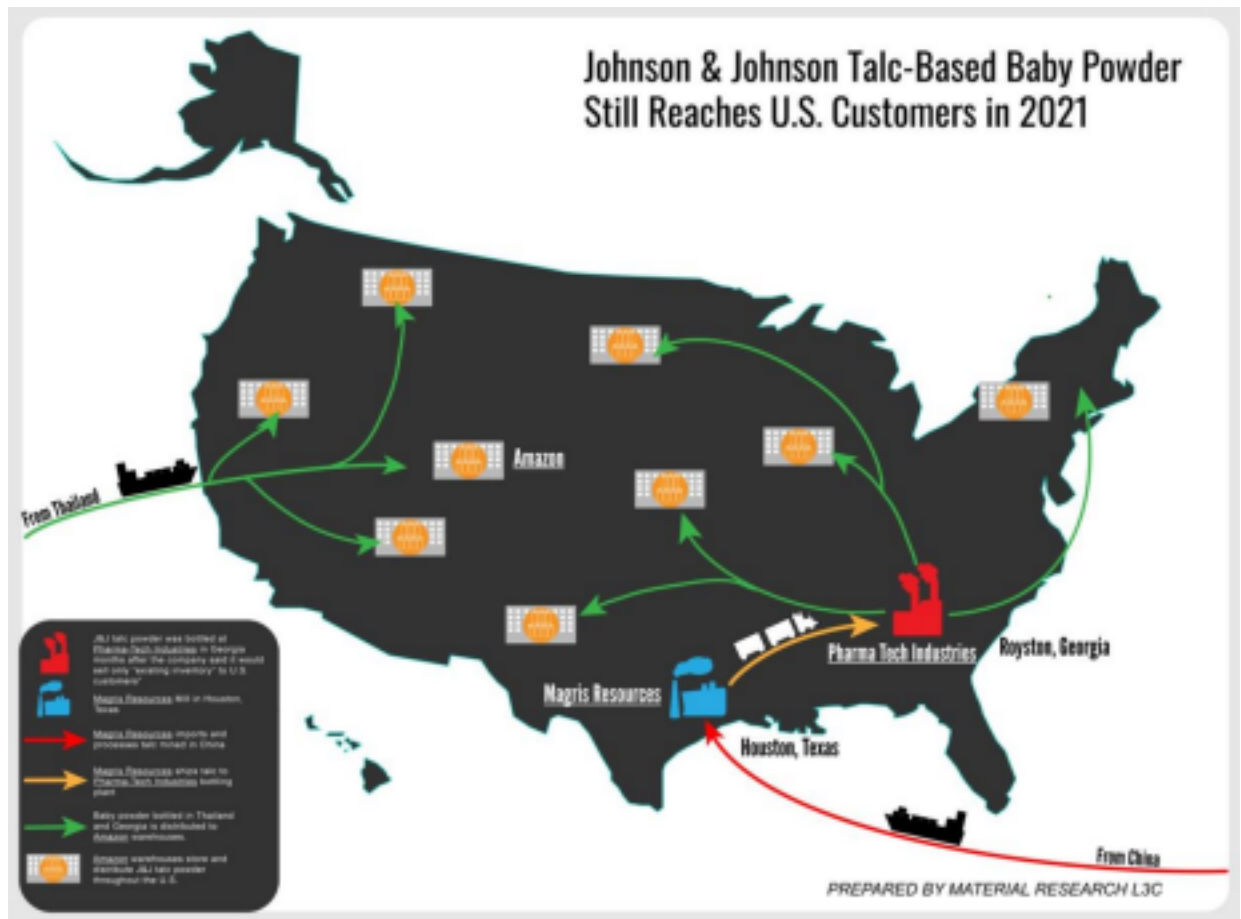
¹² Rio Tinto Minerals. Internal Memorandum. asbestosandtal.com, 2011, <http://asbestosandtal.com/Egilman%20Deposition%20Exhibits%2003.06.2018/Egilman%20249.pdf>. (p. 8)

¹³ <http://www.asbestosandtal.com/Cornstarch/2016.02.26%20FW-%20URGENT%20QUESTION-%20Talc%20Cornstarch%20Introduction%20JN1000523942.pdf>

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circle starts with w. *W. J. Lee has been known for assisting these companies in*
questionable material; therefore we have avoided direct alignment with this company. WJ.
under the relationship with ... has been skeptical at best.
This is not good news for us. What is good for talc and the talc business is good for us and vice versa. We already know
that talc is a much less important product for J and J and Colgate, but they do not want to be using products that will bring
them liability. I do not believe that their compliance and technical personnel are fully aware of the quality issues at this
time but if there are quality complaints or public scandals as a result of their use of these (inferior quality) products, the
likely response will be to formulate talc out completely and a further black mark for all talc in the public forum. RTM-
Luzenac talc will be the main loser in that eventuality.
→ *add something here*
If we view this from an Imerys perspective, while there are areas where our business will clearly be subservient to existing
Imerys relationships (like paper coating and plastic film), there will be other areas where Imerys will expect us to have
lead ... like auto motive ... and ... by expert ... at personal car ... will

Image 5. Rio Tinto Minerals [memo from 2011](#) complaining about J&J's sourcing of talc from China.



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J&J's Amazon Storefront

Finding 4: Johnson's Baby "Classics" Amazon storefront offers talc-based baby powder to consumers in the U.S. and worldwide.

J&J continues to market talc powder to families in the United States through its Amazon "Baby Classics" storefront, as seen with the four bottles obtained from its manufacturing plants in Georgia and Thailand.

Versions of J&J Baby storefronts on Amazon for consumers in other countries also offer these products, from [Australia](#) to [Mexico](#) (both sites feature products from J&J's Bangkok plant).

In [Brazil](#) and [India](#), J&J continues to make baby powder from locally-mined and -milled talc and also sells it via [Amazon](#) and other outlets.



Throughout the global South, J&J also markets its products through online outlets. For example, in

[South Africa](#), the Johnson's Baby website directs buyers to several other retailers to buy talc baby powder. In [Argentina](#), Walmart offers J&J talc baby powder. Walmart also brokers 100 g talc based powder, bottled in Thailand, for J&J in the [United States](#).

Image 6. July 2021 marketing on [Johnson's Baby Classics](#) store on Amazon; talc product is at bottom right. Screen shot, Material Research L3C.

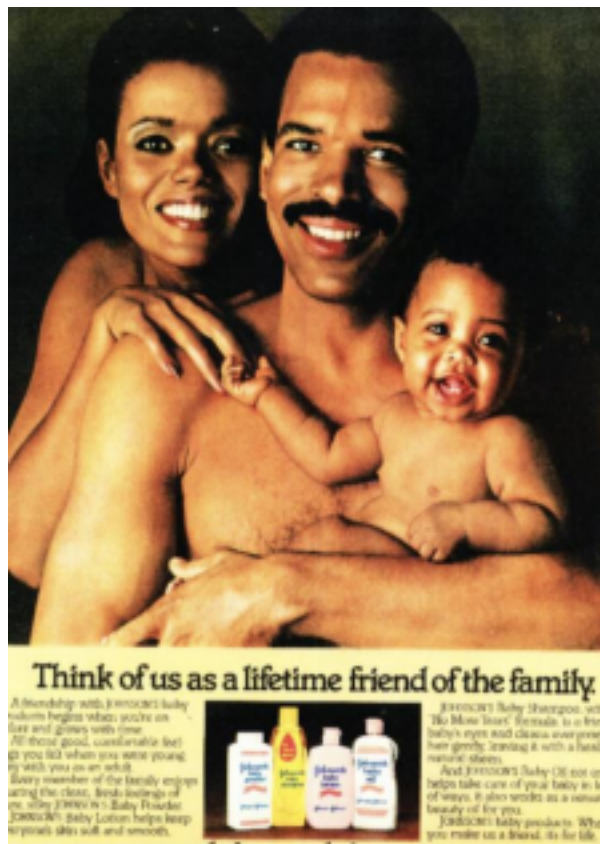


Image 7. Advertisement republished by Bloomberg.¹⁴

Amazon Warehouses

Finding 5: J&J talc-based baby powder is stored in Amazon warehouses throughout the U.S. for sale to U.S. customers.

Amazon is more than a passive platform in the ongoing distribution of J&J talc baby powder in the U.S. and worldwide. Four bottles (three from Royston and one from Bangkok) were shipped directly from Amazon warehouses when they were ordered. These warehouses were widely dispersed. Bottles were shipped from Amazon distribution centers in Sparrow Point, Maryland; Rossford, Ohio; and Nampa, Idaho. The Sparrow Point warehouse held bottles from both Georgia and Thailand.

Stockpiles of J&J talc-based baby powder are potentially vast: These are just 3 out of 110 “fulfillment centers” Amazon operates in the U.S.

J&J has long focused its marketing of baby powder to communities of color. This practice continues through their sales to U.S. consumers through online stores including Amazon.

¹⁴ https://www.bloomberg.com/features/2016-baby-powder-cancer-lawsuits/img/0331_baby_powder_advertising.jpg

APPENDIX

Additional details and photos of J&J baby powder bottles purchased on Amazon and bottled in Royston, Georgia, and Bangkok, Thailand. All photos by Material Research L3C, 2021.

SAMPLES BOTTLED IN ROYSTON, GEORGIA

SAMPLE 2

Order date: June 18, 2021

Online Platform: JnJ Baby Classic Storefront on Amazon

Seller: Trusted Retail Round Up

Seller address: Lebanon, Oregon

Shipped from: Amazon warehouse in Rossford, Ohio

Bottle size: 1.5 oz.

Made in: Royston, Georgia (per lot number)

Lot number: 30119RA

Expiration Date: October 2023.

Talc source: China



SAMPLE 8

Order date: June 18, 2021

Online Platform: JnJ Baby Classic Storefront on Amazon

Seller: Inspire Retail Supply Co.

Seller address: Tangent, Oregon

Shipped from: Amazon warehouse in Sparrow Point, Maryland.

Bottle size: 1.5 oz.

Bottled in: Royston, Georgia (per lot number)

Lot number: 26919RA.

Expiration Date: October 2023, per external packaging.

Talc source: China



SAMPLE 9

Order date: June 25, 2021

Online Platform: JnJ Baby Classic Storefront on Amazon

Seller: Twin B Sellers

Seller addresses:

1) 23269 State Road 7 Ste. 199, Boca Raton, FL 33428. This is a strip mall. Address as listed on seller's Amazon storefront.

2) 3837 Bay Lake Trail, Suite 115 North Las Vegas NV 89030. Address on return label is Twin B Sellers, 3837 Bay Lake Trail, Suite 115, North Las Vegas, NV 89030. This is the address of an Amazon Fulfillment Center. Shipped from: Amazon warehouse in Nampa, Idaho.

Bottle size: 1.5 oz.

Bottle description: Johnson's baby powder / talco para bebés.

Bottled in: Royston, Georgia (per lot number)

Lot number: 24219RA.

Expiration Date: Not listed.

Talc Source: China



Products bottled in Thailand

SAMPLE 7

Order date: June 18, 2021

Online Platform: JnJ Baby Classic Storefront on Amazon

Seller: Kelzon, also listed as H.M.H. (Brooklyn, NY)

Shipped from: Amazon warehouse in Sparrow Point, Maryland

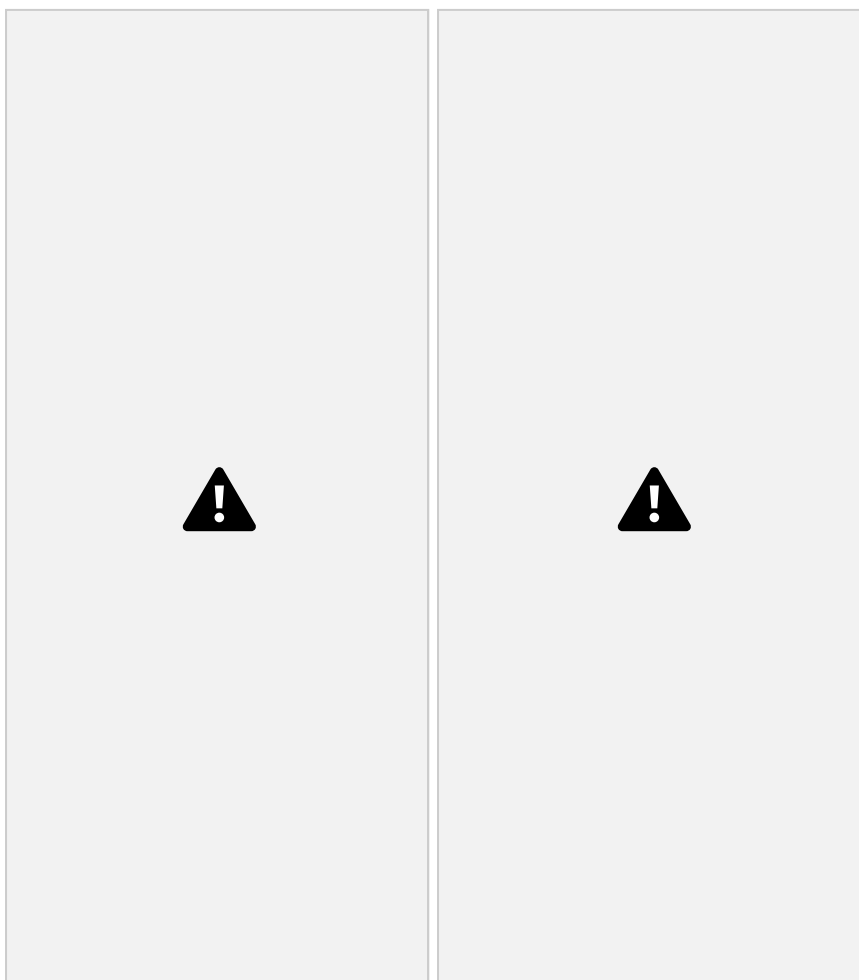
Bottle size: 4 oz.

Bottled in: Bangkok, Thailand

Lot number: 3189ZB3

Expiration date: Not provided

Talc source: China



SAMPLE 6

Order date: June 8, 2021

Online Platform: Amazon Baby “Skin Care - Powders” platform

Seller: Premier Life Store

Seller addresses: 186 Brent Crescent, London, U.K.

Shipped from: Same (Royal Mail)

Bottle size: 200 grams (note: as delivered, rather than the 4 oz. bottle ordered)

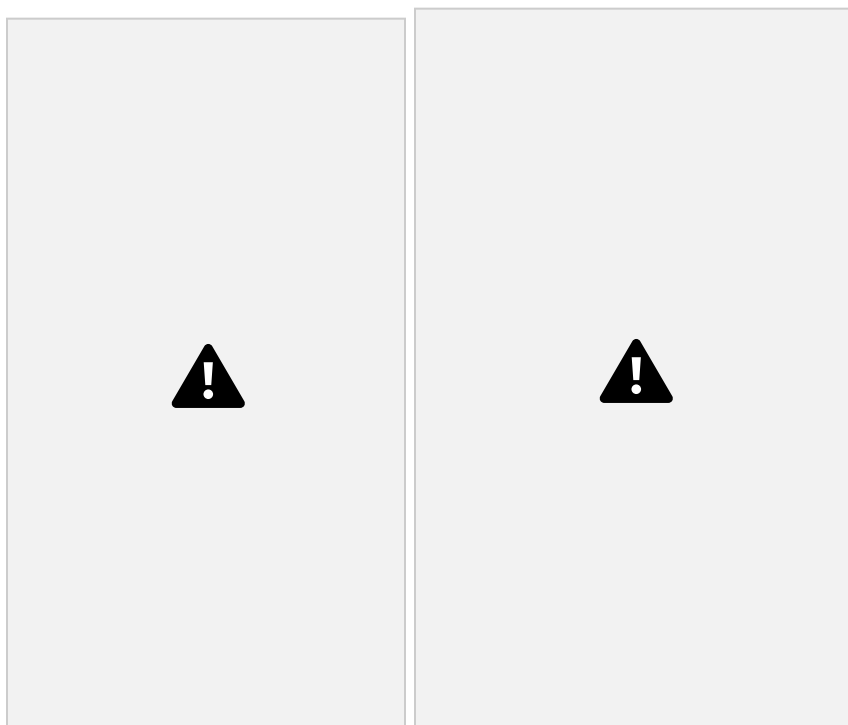
Bottle description: Johnson’s Baby Powder

Bottled in: Thailand. Distributed via Johnson & Johnson Germany.

Lot number: 3250T A4

Expiration Date: Not listed

Talc Source: Not listed



SAMPLE 5

- Order date: June 8, 2021

- Online Platform: Amazon Baby “Skin Care - Powders” platform

- Seller: Ner-Li Candles / Ranjish behal, Essbee Enterprises Inc. (Brooklyn, New York)

- Shipped from: Same (a home address).

- Bottle size: 500 grams

- Bottle description: Johnson’s Baby Powder (Classic)

- Bottled in: Johnson & Johnson (Thailand) Ltd., 106 Moo 4, Latkrabang Industrial Estate, Chalongkrung Road, Bangkok, Thailand. Distributed through Singapore or Indonesia.

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- Lot number: B3

- Expiration Date: July 2023 (Bottled on July 29, 2020)

- Talc Source: Not listed

