

Children's Health and the Environment: Making Global Connections



**Joint Meeting of the JPAC
and the Expert Advisory
Board on Children's
Health and the
Environment in North
America**

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Children are not little adults....

- ✓ They eat and drink more for their size
- ✓ They play and act differently than adults
- ✓ Their bodies are still developing
- ✓ Children may be less able to metabolize and excrete most toxic substances



Poor Environmental Quality Is Directly Responsible for 25% of All Preventable Ill-health.



Two-thirds of This Occurs Among Children.

- About 12 million children under 5 die annually. Major causes are pneumonia, diarrhea, measles & malaria.
- 90% of diarrheal disease is the result of poor sanitation and lack of access to clean water & food.
- Every 8 seconds a child dies from a water-related disease.
- Acute and chronic respiratory infections cause 3 million premature deaths a year. Indoor air pollution in developing countries, specifically biomass burning, is especially burdensome for children.

International Activities

- 1997 Group of 8 Environment Ministers
- 1999 London Declaration
- 2000 CEC Resolution
- 2001 Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Unit in Mexico
- 2002 Health and Environment Ministers of the Americas
- April 2002 G8 Environment Ministers Meeting
- May 2002 UN Special Session on Children
- August 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development

Protecting Children's Environmental Health in United States

1993 – Pesticides in the Diets of Infants & Children

1996 - Food Quality Protection Act

1996 - Safe Drinking Water Act

1996 - EPA National Agenda

1997 - Executive Order

1997 – G8 Declaration on Children's Health

2000 - Children's Health Act of 2000

2000 – EPA Children's Research Strategy

2001 – Administrator makes children's health a priority

2001 – President Bush renews Executive Order

Priority Issues in the U.S.

The Executive Order established the Task Force on Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks to Children identifies four priority areas needing attention

Asthma	→ 4.8 million American children have asthma	<i>Leading cause of hospitalization for children</i>
Developmental Disorders	→ 4% of infants born with significant birth defects	<i>Leading cause of infant death and lifelong disability</i>
Childhood Cancer	→ 12,000 new cancers in children each year	<i>Leading cause of disease-related death in children 1-14 years old</i>
Unintentional Injuries	→ 8000 children killed each year	<i>Leading cause of death in children</i>

Task Force Efforts

- Lead Poisoning Prevention Strategy
- Asthma Strategy
- National Children's Study - Longitudinal cohort study to establish relationship between environmental factors and health from preconception through adolescence
- Environmentally Healthy Schools
- Research data base – (CHEHSIR)

Task Force Departments and Agencies

- Department of Health & Human Services
- Department of Housing & Urban Development
- Department of Justice
- Department of Defense
- Department of Energy
- Department of Labor
- Department of Education
- Department of Agriculture
- Department of Transportation
- Environmental Protection Agency
- Consumer Product Safety Commission
- Office Of Management and Budget
- White House Council on Environmental Quality
- Office of Science and Technology Policy
- Domestic Policy Council
- National Economic Council

Science

- 12 Children's Research Centers
- Risk Assessment
 - examples: Organophosphate Cumulative Risk Assessment; Cancer Guidelines; Exposure Factor Handbook
- Voluntary Children's Chemical Evaluation Program
- High Production Volume Chemical Testing Program

Economics

- Economic analysis is critical to decision-making at EPA
- Benefits to children in past have not been well quantified or studied by economists
- EPA developed the “Children’s Health Valuation Handbook”
 - first reference guide on this topic
- EPA funding economic research efforts

Indicators

- “America’s Children and the Environment: A First View of Available Measures” released December 2000
- “America’s Children and the Environment: Key Indicators” to be released Summer 2002
- EPA’s “State of the Environment” Report to be released November 2002

Collaborating with States

- ECOS and ASTHO
 - State Profiles
 - “Tool box” for the *Catching Your Breath* asthma project
 - ECOS Asthma Resolution
- NCSL
 - Children’s Environmental Health Legislative Bill Tracking
 - Legislative Policy Options Guide
 - Technical Support
- National Governor’s Association
 - Connection between Smart Growth and Children’s Environmental Health

Federal Collaborations with Health Professionals

- Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Units (ATSDR and EPA)
- American Academy of Pediatrics - Chief Pediatric Residents Training (EPA)
- American Nurses Association - Continuing Education for Nurses (EPA)
- Ambulatory Pediatric Association - Planning for Pediatric Environmental Health Fellowships (EPA)

Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Units



Tips to Protect Children from Environmental Threats

EPA has developed a set of relatively simple tips on what you can do to protect your children.



PROTECT CHILDREN FROM ENVIRONMENTAL THREATS

Help children breathe easier



- Don't smoke or let others smoke near your kids
- Keep your home and pets as clean as possible. Dust, mold, certain insects, and pet dander can trigger asthma attacks and allergies.
- Limit outdoor activity when air pollution is bad such as ozone alert days

Protect children from lead poisoning



- Wash children's hands before eating and wash bottles, pacifiers, and toys often
- Wash walls and window sills to protect kids from dust and peeling paint contaminated with lead - especially in older homes
- Run the cold water for 30 seconds to flush lead from pipes
- Get kids tested for lead - check with your doctor

Protect children from carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning



- Have fuel-burning appliances, furnace flues and chimneys checked once a year
- Never use gas ovens or burners for heat and never use barbecues indoors
- Never sleep in rooms with unvented gas or kerosene space heaters
- Don't idle cars or lawnmowers in the garage
- Install a UL approved CO detector in sleeping areas

Keep pesticides and other toxic chemicals away from children



- Put food and trash away in closed containers to keep pests from coming into your home
- Don't use pesticides if you don't have to - look for alternatives
- Read product labels and follow directions
- Use bait & traps instead of bug sprays when you can and put where kids can't get them
- Store where kids can't reach them and never put in other containers that kids can mistake for food or drink
- Keep children, toys & pets away when using pesticides and don't let them play in fields, orchards and gardens after pesticides have been used
- Wash fruits and vegetables under running water before eating

Protect children from too much sun



- Have them wear hats, sunglasses, and protective clothing
- Use sunscreen on kids over 6 months and keep infants out of the sun
- Keep them out of the mid-day sun - the sun is most intense between 10 and 4

Safeguard them from high levels of radon



- Test your home for radon with a home test kit
- Call your state radon office if radon level is 4 pCi/L or higher

Get involved

Call toll free **1-877-590-KIDS** for more information or check out EPA's web site at www.EPA.gov/children

EPA Office of Children's Health Protection

EPA/100/F-99/010



And Remember - It's All About the Children..

