



Publication Notice

ENDOCRINE DISRUPTING CHEMICALS:

NEW PUBLICATION SHOWS NEED FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Are human sperm counts declining due to exposure to certain environmental contaminants? Is human breast cancer increasing due to exposure to organochlorine chemicals? Are chemicals that have the potential to interfere with the normal functioning of the endocrine system (often referred to as endocrine disrupting chemicals or EDCs) threatening future generations of humans and certain wildlife species?

A new publication released today, concludes that the evidence that human health has been adversely affected by exposure to EDCs is generally weak, but that further research and information is needed. The publication is available on the web at http://www.who.int/pcs/pcs_new.html

The report concludes that there is sufficient evidence that adverse effects have occurred as a result of exposure to EDCs in some wildlife species. Therefore, because of continuing concerns and scientific uncertainties, studies on the potential effects posed by these chemicals should remain a high global priority requiring coordinated and strengthened international research strategies. There is, in particular, an urgent need for studies in vulnerable populations, and especially in infants and children, since exposure during critical developmental periods may have irreversible effects, concludes the report.

The report, entitled "Global Assessment of the State-of-the-Science of Endocrine Disruptors", is the result of a global comprehensive review of the publicly available scientific literature on EDCs organized by the International Programme on Chemical Safety (IPCS). The IPCS is sponsored by the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the International Labour Organization.

This assessment was requested in 1997 by the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety, the 1997 Declaration of the Environment Leaders of the Eight on Children's Environmental Health, and endorsed by the 50th World Health Assembly in 1997.

Over 60 international scientific experts provided input into this document either as IPCS Steering Group Members, chapter leaders, authors, or reviewers. The assessment is unique in providing a global perspective on the endocrine disruptor issue, and in providing a framework by which strength-of-the-evidence analysis can be performed to determine whether there is a causal association between an adverse biological effect and exposure to an endocrine disrupting chemical.

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