

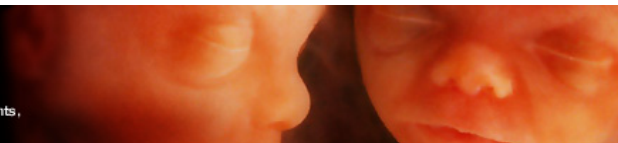


ENVIRONMENTAL WORKING GROUP

BodyBurden

The Pollution in Newborns

A benchmark investigation of industrial chemicals, pollutants, and pesticides in human umbilical cord blood



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Study Finds Industrial Pollution Begins in the Womb

Hundreds of Toxic Chemicals Measured in Newborn Babies

WASHINGTON — Not long ago, scientists believed that babies in the womb were largely protected from most toxic chemicals. A new study helps confirm an opposite view: that chemical exposure begins in the womb, as hundreds of industrial chemicals, pollutants and pesticides are pumped back and forth from mother to baby through umbilical cord blood.

Environmental Working Group (EWG) commissioned laboratory tests of 10 American Red Cross cord blood samples for the most extensive array of industrial chemicals, pesticides and other pollutants ever studied. The group found that the babies averaged 200 contaminants in their blood. The pollutants included mercury, fire retardants, pesticides and the Teflon chemical PFOA. In total, the babies' blood had 287 chemicals, including 209 never before detected in cord blood.

The blood samples came from babies born in U.S. hospitals in August and September of 2004. The study, called *Body Burden: The Pollution in Newborns*, tested each sample of umbilical cord blood for an unprecedented 413 industrial and consumer product chemicals. The study (www.ewg.org/reports/bodyburden2/) is part of an important new science that measures toxins in people — the human body burden.

"For years scientists have studied pollution in the air, water, land and in our food. Recently they've investigated its health impacts on adults. Now we find this pollution is reaching babies during vital stages of development," said EWG Vice President for Research Jane Houlihan. "These findings raise questions about the gaps in our federal safety net. Instead of rubber-stamping almost every new chemical that industry

invents, we've got to strengthen and modernize the laws that are supposed to protect Americans from pollutants."

U.S. industries manufacture and import approximately 75,000 chemicals, 3,000 of them at over a million pounds per year. Yet health officials do not know how many of these chemicals pollute fetal blood and what the health consequences of in utero exposures might be. Many of these chemicals require specialized techniques to detect. Chemical manufacturers are not required to make available to the public or government health officials methods to detect their chemicals in humans, and most do not volunteer them.

EWG's Houlihan said that had her group been able to test for more chemicals, it would almost certainly have detected them.

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The Environmental Working Group and Environmental Working Group Action Fund are nonprofits that use the power of information to protect public health and the environment.

Commonweal is a nonprofit health and environmental research institute in Bolinas, California, whose programs contribute to human and ecosystem health - to a safer world for people and for all life.

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