



Pollution in People

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Washingtonians Test Positive for Toxic Chemicals ***Public Health Coalition Says Action Needed to Protect People from Harmful Effects***

Seattle – Today a diverse group of Washingtonians gathered together for the first time to react to results from recent lab testing of their blood, hair, and urine, which detected from 26 to 39 toxic chemicals in each of their bodies.

According to ***Pollution in People***, a study commissioned by the Toxic-Free Legacy Coalition, all of the study participants tested positive for multiple toxic chemicals. The chemicals tested for included: common pesticides such as carbaryl; plasticizers and fragrance carriers found in vinyl, toys, and personal care products; perfluorinated chemicals such as those used to make “Teflon” and stain-repellants found in some food packaging, carpeting, and clothing; toxic flame retardants found in electronics such as televisions, mattresses, and furniture; heavy metals such as lead, mercury, and arsenic; and even chemicals such as DDT and PCBs, which have been banned for decades.

“To find out I have this load of toxic chemicals in my own body and know there isn’t really any way to keep them out is very disturbing,” said Allyson Schrier, a test subject, children’s book author, and mother of two. Schrier added, “I have a son with learning disabilities and to think that exposure to toxic chemicals may have played a role in that makes me feel angry, sad, and helpless.”

The chemicals detected in the 10 Washingtonians tested have been linked with serious health problems such as infertility, cancer, and learning deficits.

- Several test subjects had levels of chemicals that were at, near, or even higher than EPA “safe” levels.
- All 10 participants tested positive for “Teflon chemicals” or PFCs, one of which has been declared a “likely carcinogen.”
- Phthalates, dubbed the “everywhere chemical,” also showed up in all of the participants. Linked in boys and men to reproductive problems such as small or abnormal testes, lower sperm counts and damaged sperm, phthalates are found in a wide array of everyday products including cosmetics, vinyl toys, and vinyl flooring.
- Even toxics expert and organic gardener and shopper Laurie Valeriano tested positive for more than two dozen chemicals.

“Something should have been done to make sure these toxic chemicals were better regulated 20 years ago,” said Dr. Patricia Dawson, one of the test subjects and a breast cancer surgeon at Swedish Providence Medical Center.

(MORE)

Most of the nearly 82,000 chemicals in use today are not tested for toxicity and are not required by federal law to pass basic health and safety testing, and Washington state lacks the regulatory structure to prevent harmful chemicals from turning up in products, air, water, and people.

“We know enough now to act to restrict the use of many of these toxic chemicals; waiting for people to get sick or tackling the problem chemical by chemical won’t address this threat to our health,” said Pam Tazioli, one of the test subjects, a breast cancer survivor, and the Washington state coordinator for the Breast Cancer Fund.

The chemicals turning up in people come from some obvious sources such as food, but exposure to many of them also comes from other everyday products such as cosmetics, vinyl, home electronics and furniture, packaging, pans, and even clothing. The presence of these toxic chemicals is often not on the label, and the companies that sell them may not even know whether they contain the chemicals.

“The system is broken and in urgent need of comprehensive reform. It is time to stop putting people at risk for serious health problems from exposure to toxic chemicals they have no control over,” said Washington Toxics Coalition staff scientist and author of the study, Erika Schreder.

State Senate Majority Leader Lisa Brown of Spokane, who was also a test subject, commented, “Innovative businesses, as well as state and local government agencies, have begun to phase out some dangerous chemicals. We need a more comprehensive policy to ensure that Washington is not only the most beautiful place in the world to live, work, and raise a family, but also a truly healthy place to call home.”

The Toxic-Free Legacy Coalition offered consumers the following tips for avoiding toxic chemicals in their homes:

- Choose organic food, at least for these foods found to be most contaminated by pesticides: apples, bell peppers, celery, cherries, grapes, nectarines, peaches, pears, potatoes, raspberries, spinach, and strawberries.
- Don't buy products made of vinyl (PVC). There are many alternatives to vinyl toys, flooring, shower curtains, and food packaging.
- Choose cosmetics and personal products from companies that are committed to safer products made without toxic chemicals like phthalates. These include Burt's Bees, Avalon, and Aubrey Organics.
- When buying seafood, make safer choices such as wild salmon, Pacific cod, Alaskan black cod, Atlantic herring, tilapia, and sardines. Avoid more contaminated fish such as tuna steaks, swordfish, and king mackerel.
- Contact your elected officials and tell them it's time for a new common sense chemicals policy that will keep our families safe.

For more information about the study, a full list of participants and their individual profiles, as well as more on how to limit your exposure to toxic chemicals and find out about safer alternatives, go to www.pollutioninpeople.org.

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