

209 MORE REASONS TO USE LILY PRODUCTS!

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Exposure to chemicals begins in womb

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Human exposure to a sea of toxic chemicals begins in the womb, according to a benchmark study by Environmental Working Group, a nonprofit watchdog organization. As reported in "Body Burden: The Pollution in Newborns," released July 14, 10 samples of umbilical cord blood from U.S.-born children were tested for 413 industrial and consumer product chemicals. Of these, 287 chemicals were present in the samples, with an average of 209 contaminants in each newborn child.

The study contradicts earlier theories that the womb protects newborns from many toxic chemicals. Instead, cord blood brings not only nutrients and oxygen to the developing child, but also many potentially harmful chemicals including mercury, contaminants from flame retardants, Teflon, organochlorine pesti-

ci-pesticides of plastic production, and industrial insulators and lubricants.

EWG's research (www.ewg.org/reports/bodyburden/) represents the first testing of cord blood for many of these substances; 209 of the chemicals found had never before been detected in cord blood. Had the scientists been able to test for more chemicals, they almost certainly would have found them, said Jane Houlihan, EWG's vice president for research. Because infants and children are significantly more vulnerable than adults to harm from exposure to toxic substances, the body burden of toxic chemicals in newborns and children may play a role in increasing rates of a number of childhood diseases.

"The biggest thing here is just the sheer overwhelming number of chemicals and the myriad ways that they might interact with each other," said Dr. Alan Greene, founder of www.drgreene.com and attending pediatrician at Packard Children's Hospital at Stanford University. "It's a wake-up call for con-

sumers. This shows that the many chemicals that have been used in all kinds of products over the last 50 years are getting into the bodies of our youngest, most vulnerable population at the most critical time of development."

While the study's authors make recommendations for major changes at the policy and regulatory level, individual choices also matter, Greene said. "There is strong and increasing evidence that just by choosing organic foods over conventional foods, you can decrease your pesticide levels. Whether it's our clothing and our cleaning products, our gardening, how we handle pests in the home, people will be looking for more natural ways of doing it that are effective. We need to help close the loop for people, since every little change we make helps tilt the odds in favor of kids." ■

Elaine Lipson is a writer and editor specializing in organic foods and related issues and the author of "The Organic Foods Sourcebook" (Contemporary, 2001).