



PRESS RELEASE

UNDER EMBARGO: Official launch Thursday 1 October, 00.00 EST (Vancouver time), 09.00 CET (1)

European NGOs welcome doctors' warning of harm to newborns from toxic chemicals in consumer products

Brussels, 1 October 2015 – Two European health and environment groups strongly welcome the statement released today by the International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics (FIGO) addressing the risks to babies and mothers associated with everyday exposure to toxic chemicals. (1)

The “**Special Communication: Reproductive Health Impacts of Exposure to Toxic Environmental Chemicals**” says that “*Exposure to toxic environmental chemicals during pregnancy and breastfeeding is ubiquitous and is a threat to healthy human reproduction.* » It cites research showing that virtually all pregnant women bear a chemical burden and that babies are born “pre-polluted”.

A particular cause for concern is exposure to substances known as endocrine (or hormone) disrupting chemicals (EDCs). “A key adverse health impact of ubiquitous exposure to environmental chemicals is disruption of hormones that regulate healthy human reproduction and development,” the statement says.

Hormone (or endocrine) disrupting chemicals (EDCs) are found in food packaging, pesticides, cosmetics and chemical coatings on household products. Many of the researchers working on this topic are agreed that these substances are contributing to the increasing incidence of many conditions.

The FIGO opinion lists the health problems associated with exposure to toxic chemicals as « *Miscarriage and fetal loss, impaired fetal growth, congenital malformations, impaired or reduced neurodevelopment and cognitive function, and an increase in cancer, attention problems, ADHD behaviors, and hyperactivity* ».

FIGO represents 125 national societies of obstetricians and gynaecologists around the world. It is dedicated to improving the health of women and newborns and advancing the science and practice of obstetrics and gynaecology. The document is endorsed by many medical and health bodies, including the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists in the UK. (2)

WECF – Women in Europe for a Common Future

“*We very much support FIGO’s recommendations. Babies are the most vulnerable and least able to protect themselves. Harmful exposure to toxic chemicals in the womb occurs at very low levels and the effects cannot be reversed. This is why we consider it vital that doctors, midwives and other professionals call for protection against toxic chemicals,*” explains Anne Barre, co-president WECF France.

Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL)

“This statement comes at an important time. The European Commission is dragging its feet on fully implementing pesticide safety legislation to regulate endocrine disrupting chemicals. (3) The European Union ought to be leading the way in reducing harmful exposures to toxics in food and consumer products. Huge opportunities exist for improving health and for health cost savings from preventing exposures to harmful chemicals,(4)” says Genon Jensen, Executive Director, HEAL.

The statement comes in advance of FIGO’s annual congress in Vancouver (4-9 October 2015) and immediately prior to a pre-congress workshop to create an action plan. Over 100 participants are expected to take part.

The International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics (FIGO) communication urges obstetricians, gynaecologists, midwives, women’s health nurse practitioners, nurses and other health professionals to:

- Advocate for policies to prevent exposure to toxic environmental chemicals
- Work to ensure a healthy food system for all
- Make environmental health part of health care
- Champion environmental justice.

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Notes

1. The FIGO’s opinion is published in the International Journal of Gynecology and Obstetrics [add link here](#) on Thursday 1 October, 00.00 EST (Vancouver time), 09.00 am CET here. FIGO’s official press release is pasted at the bottom of this document.

2. Quoted in the official press release (pasted below) are the FIGO president, Sir Sabaratnam Arulkumaran is Professor Emeritus of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, St George’s University Hospital, London, and Gian Carlo Di Renzo, MD, PhD, Honorary Secretary of FIGO lead author of the FIGO opinion.

3. In the EU, a 2009 law was introduced to forbid the marketing of hormone disrupting pesticides, which has not yet been implemented. For more information, see CHEM Trust’s « Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals (EDCs) and their Science & Regulation: Some common questions answered http://www.chemtrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/CHEM_Trust_EDC_FAQ.pdf

An example of a chemical that may be banned once legislation is implemented is the suspected endocrine disrupter, glyphosate found in the herbicide, RoundUp. In March this year, the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), part of the World Health Organization (WHO) said that glyphosate, the key ingredient in Monsanto’s Roundup, and one of the world’s most widely used herbicides, was a « probable carcinogen ». See Lancet Oncology, Carcinogenicity of tetrachlorvinphos, parathion, malathion, diazinon, and glyphosate, Volume 16, No. 5, p490-491, May 2015 [http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanonc/article/PIIS1470-2045\(15\)70134-8/abstract](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanonc/article/PIIS1470-2045(15)70134-8/abstract)

4. Costs attributable to exposure to a selected sample of endocrine-disrupting chemicals (with only the highest probability of causation) were recently estimated at €157 billion per year in the European Union. See Trasande L, Zoeller RT, Hass U, Kortenkamp A, Grandjean P, Myers JP, et al. Estimating

burden and disease costs of exposure to endocrine-disrupting chemicals in the European Union. J Clin Endocrinol Metab 2015;100(4):1245–55.

HEAL's "Health costs in the EU – how much is related to EDCs?" provides cost estimates for both the EU as a whole and for the different EU country members <http://www.env-health.org/news/latest-news/article/health-costs-in-the-eu-how-much-is>

Resources

Q&A on Endocrine disruptors, ChemTrust, : <http://www.chemtrust.org.uk/hormone-disrupting-chemicals-edcs-faq/>

Resource list on pregnancy and EDCs, HEAL, is available here http://env-health.org/IMG/pdf/20032015_paw__edcs_pesticides_and_pregnancy_final.pdf

"Nesting project", WECF www.projectnesting.org

EDCs pocket guide, WECF – in French and in English <http://www.projetnesting.fr/Guide-Perturbateurs-Endocriniens.html>

"Choosing our Future - For a healthier life, consume chemicals in moderation", HEAL Comic strip with educational background and resource sections in English, French and Dutch <http://www.env-health.org/policies/chemicals/choosing-our-future/>

"Girl, Disrupted: Hormone Disruptors and Women's Reproductive Health » Collaborative on Health and Environment, <http://www.env-health.org/news/latest-news/article/che-releases-girl-disrupted>
Translated into French by WECF http://www.wecf.eu/francais/publications/2012/Menace_sante_femmes.php