

ENVIRONMENTAL CONTAMINANTS IN HUMAN MILK

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6

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Since the mid 1900th century a booming chemical industry has exposed the human population to an ever increasing load of synthetic chemicals. Of particular concern are the persistent environmental toxicants that accumulate in our bodies, and are transferred to our children during fetal life and breastfeeding. Although the levels of many toxicants have declined during the last 40 years due to the Stockholm convention, we still observe adverse effects of these old "legacy" chemicals, related to reproduction, obesity, neurodevelopment and to the immune system. In parallel, new chemicals are steadily entering the scene. One such group of particular worrisome new chemicals are the perfluorinated chemicals which can be found in water repellent material. A recent Faroese study reported that children with the highest exposure to these chemicals had increased risk of vaccine responses below a clinically protective level. Vaccinations programs prevents an estimated 2.5 million deaths worldwide annually, but a weakened immune system has implication beyond vaccine responses, increasing our susceptibility to infections and carcinogens.



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