

HECANET December 2005

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF ARTICLES

In India it was reported that even infants not spared by asthma. With pollution levels reaching alarming levels, medical practitioners are reporting that asthma patients are as young as 10 months; they say the villain is air pollution. Many articles addressed air pollution in developing country cities. The Iranian government closed all schools and kindergartens in Iran's capital city for two days because air pollution had reached dangerous levels. A report on air pollution in poor areas of Durban, South Africa highlighted that a study had found an abnormally high 52% of students and teachers at a primary school bordering an industrial plant suffered from asthma. It found that increases in air pollution tended to aggravate asthma symptoms in children. Industrial air pollution was also spotlighted in the US press with people who breathe the nation's most unhealthy factory air wanting to know if their daily dose of toxic pollution is slowing the academic and physical development of their children. This came on the heels of a report that found that blacks and the poor in the US were more likely to breathe the unhealthiest air. Meanwhile, new US air quality regulations were proposed, intending to reduce modestly sooty pollutants. The particles, some so small that they can penetrate deep into the lungs, pose especially serious risks to children with asthma.

Articles continued to focus on the cocktail of chemicals that children are being exposed to, and which can potentially affect their reproductive and learning development or cause cancer. The EU approved a bill (REACH) to protect the public from toxic chemicals, intending to avert cases of infertility, cancer, skin disease and neurological disorders. The media addressed a range of toxics in various articles, including: a study examining mothers' serum collected 4 decades ago and subsequent growth patterns of their children that suggested that prenatal exposure to PCBs may impact growth; flame retardants that contaminate everyone but concentrate especially in children; studies that contend that bisphenol A (BPA) - widely used in baby bottles and other hard, clear plastic containers - can cause brain damage even at low doses; and illnesses blamed on toxic substances (in Chechnya and Turkmenistan); benzene (Ecuador, UK), asbestos (UK), perchlorate (US) and PFOA (US).

A large number of articles dealt with lead. Particularly notable was the phasing-out of leaded gasoline in Sub-Saharan Africa (as of 1 January 2006), an important step towards limiting the exposure of African children to a notorious heavy metal, which is linked with a wide range of ailments and ill health including damage to the brains of babies and young children. A set of articles focused attention on the town in Peru, which is located near a US-run smelter, where virtually every child suffers from lead poisoning. A study in Mexico City observed reduced intellectual development in children with prenatal lead exposure. There was also an article on the plight of children and pregnant women suffering from lead poisoning in a Roma refugee camp

in Kosovo. US articles focused largely on lead in paint, and legislation and other measures that are being undertaken at the national, state and local levels to combat this threat to child health. US/EPA is proposing new requirements for contractors and construction professionals when working in homes that contain lead-based paint. Other sources of lead highlighted in various articles included: Christmas decorations, necklaces, zippers, lunchboxes and candy. Pesticides were also covered in a large amount of articles, including one highlighting the exposure of young farmers in Yemen. Pesticide drift was the focus in both Washington State (where legislation had been proposed to allow for advance notification of spraying near schools and childcare centers) and Florida (where a number of babies with birth defects were born to farmer workers). As in previous months, mercury was the subject of a great number of articles. CEC said that it intends to investigate the US for failing to enforce the federal Clean Water Act against coal-fired power plants with respect to mercury discharges to air and water. Other articles dealt with the state-level attempts to address mercury emissions from coal-fired power stations, the validity of the assertion that there is a link between mercury and autism, and the prevalence of mercury in certain fish.

WHO underscored that urgency of addressing the fact that unsafe drinking water and poor sanitation kill 4,000 children every day. A report in Yemen concluded that 75% of the countries' 20 million population is threatened by water-borne diseases, such as malaria, due to unclean drinking water. About 50% of children's deaths are caused by diarrhoea and 30% by malaria and typhoid. The Chinese Government reported that about 300 million people living in China's vast countryside drink unsafe water tainted by chemicals and other contaminants. There was also an article on filtering as an inexpensive way to clean water. A US study concluded that more than 140 contaminants with no enforceable safety limits are found in US's drinking water, and strongly urged that federal laws and policies be reformed to ensure that vulnerable populations, including pregnant women and children, are protected from chemicals.

WHO issued an ["Ecosystems and Human Well-being: Health Synthesis"](#) report based on the findings of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment's (MA) global and sub-global assessments of how ecosystem changes do, or could, affect human health and well-being. It concluded that rapid industrialization, over fishing, overgrazing and deforestation have destroyed sources of safe drinking water and are linked to thousands of deaths each year. For example, deforestation endangers health by intensifying the effects of natural disasters, with reduced crop yields. This impairs the nutritional status of households and diet deficiencies harm children's physical and mental development. BBC published a number of articles on the links between environmental pollution and health, stressing that diseases carried in water are responsible for 80% of illnesses and deaths in developing countries, killing a child every eight seconds. Each year 2.1 million people die from diarrhoeal diseases associated with poor water, and 3 million people are killed worldwide by outdoor air pollution. A report on China's environmental health challenges pointed out that several million people burn raw coal in un-vented stoves, and toxic compounds permeate their homes and negatively affect the health of children and adults alike. Because children's immune system and detoxification mechanisms are not fully developed, toxic agents have a more serious impact on them than on adults. A report from India concluded that at least 1 in 2 school students suffer from allergies and 16% suffer from asthma, thanks to pollution. The report recommended an Environment Plan for Bangalore with a focus on water conservation, remodeling of storm water drains, abatement of air and sound pollution through public transport, use of LPG and penalties.

Climate change and its effects on human health were also addressed by the media. A report from WHO concluded that disease outbreaks in humans are likely to increase as global climate change reshapes the world's ecosystems. According to the report, 3,000 African children die each day from malaria, and climate change is making the disease even more virulent. The study finds that poor nations are hit hardest, with climate change threatening Southern Africa's food security. Rising seas and frequent flooding have already forced a community in Vanuatu to leave their homes. Over recent years rates of flooding have increased, triggering a variety of problems including increased malaria and skin diseases among children as a result of more standing water for mosquitoes to breed. Another articles addressed the fact that climate change is already affecting human health in Europe. Summaries of articles grouped under the following themes appear below, with links to their full texts:

- (1) AIR POLLUTION: (a) Outdoor air pollution (b) Environmental Tobacco Smoke/Smoking**
- (2) CHEMICALS: (a) General, (b) Lead, (c) Pesticides, (d) Mercury**
- (3) WATER AND SANITATION**
- (4) MISCELLANEOUS (a) General (b) Climate Change (c) Americas (d) Asia**

Healthy Environments for Children Alliance (HECA) is a world-wide alliance to reduce environmental risks to children's health that arise from the settings where they live, learn, play, and sometimes work, by providing knowledge, increasing political will, mobilizing resources, and catalysing intense and urgent action.

HECANET is an international mailing list dedicated to promoting healthy environments for children. The list provides updates on the activities of the Healthy Environments for Children Alliance (HECA) and its members, as well as an overview of media coverage of children's environmental health issues and relevant meetings, research findings and information and advocacy resources.

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EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

(1) HECA Developments

The Healthy Environments for Children Alliance Secretariat and the WHO Regional Office for Africa organized an inter-regional consultation on "Improving Children's Environmental Health in Settings - Experiences and lessons for policies and action" in Entebbe, Uganda from 29 November to 2 December 2005. The purpose of the meeting was to identify and capitalize on the strengths of settings-based action to address environmental risks to children's health and to emphasize the importance of monitoring and the use of indicators for the evaluation of the effectiveness of interventions. Participants in the consultation represented Healthy Environments for Children's projects and other initiatives, such as the Global Initiative on Children's Environmental Health Indicators (CEHI) and the International Network to Promote Household Water Treatment and Safe Storage to address children's environmental health issues, from five regions of WHO. From the discussions, presentations, working group sessions, interactive workshops and site visits, participants came up with conclusions and recommendations in the following theme areas: 1) effectiveness of settings-based action in addressing environmental risks to children's health; 2) building the evidence base on effective interventions for children's environmental health; 3) good practices in addressing environmental risks to children's health in settings; 4) identifying and capitalizing on the strengths of settings-based action to address CEH; 5) building capacity and strength through linkages. The outcome will be used to move forward with HECA and other similar projects and programmes aimed at improving children's environmental health and using this to replicate and/or scale up. For more info:

Healthy Environments for Children Alliance: <http://www.who.int/heca/en/>

International Network to Promote Household Water Treatment and Safe Storage: http://www.who.int/household_water/en/

The Global Initiative on Children's Environmental Health Indicators: <http://www.who.int/ceh/indicators/en/>

(2) Global Initiative on Children's Environmental Health Indicators' (CEHI)

The Global Initiative on Children's Environmental Health Indicators' (CEHI) latest issue of its newsletter is now available: CEHI Newsletter N°5 - December 2005. This newsletter has been set up to engage partners with the Global Initiative on Children's Environmental Health Indicators and to inform those interested in CEH indicator work. It aims to provide up-to-date information on relevant global, regional and national indicator activities. This newsletter does intend to cover general children's environmental health issues. The N°5 CEHI Newsletter:

- i) Highlights two CEH recent events in Argentina (Nov 05) and Uganda (Nov-Dec 05);
- ii) Provides an update on the Kenyan CEH indicator pilot project & announces the upcoming launch in January 2006 of the report: Children's Health and the Environment in North America, a first regional report under the Global Initiative on CEHI;
- iii) Gives information about the indicator project initiated on Children's Environmental Health Indicators in Canada; &
- iv) Highlights the newly published "Indoor air pollution and household energy monitoring: workshop resources".

CEHI newsletters are available at: <http://www.who.int/ceh/news/newsletter/en/>

For further enquiries, to sign-up or submit contributions to our next issue, please contact: cehindicators@who.int

(3) UNEP - Sub-Saharan Africa Celebrates Ledged Petrol Phase-Out

A promise made three years ago to rid Sub-Saharan Africa of leaded petrol has been met. The United Nations Environment

Programme (UNEP) announced that as of 1 January 2006 the region's vehicle fuels will be lead-free. The phase-out, promised at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in 2002, means a healthier world for millions of people across the region. Lead, a notorious heavy metal, is linked with a wide range of ailments and ill health including damage to the brains of babies and young children. The Partnership for Clean Fuels and Vehicles (PCFV) was formed at WSSD in 2002 as a so called Type II partnership with its first aim of phasing out leaded petrol in sub-Saharan Africa. It was established to take forward the Dakar Declaration of 2001 where sub-Saharan African countries agreed to phase out leaded petrol. In early 2006 the Partnership will launch a global leaded gasoline phase-out for the rest of the developing world and economies in transition with the goal of eliminating leaded petrol world-wide by 2008. The Partnership is now focusing its attention on the very high levels of sulphur found in fuels in developing countries and economies in transition. Sulphur causes emissions of fine particles or flecks of soot which have been linked to health problems including heart attacks in the elderly and vulnerable groups. For more information visit [PCFV's web-site](#).

(4) WHO launches "Child and adolescent injury prevention: A global call to action"

WHO is scaling up its work in the area of child and adolescent [injury and violence prevention](#). To call attention to this growing, yet preventable problem, WHO, UNICEF and a number of experts from around the world have developed a brief document entitled "[Child and adolescent injury prevention: A global call to action](#)" which draws attention to the magnitude of the problem and how child and adolescent injuries may be prevented. The document is written primarily for policy-makers and donors and is the first in a series of documents which will culminate in the publication of a World Report on Child and Adolescent Injury and Violence Prevention in 2008.

(5) United Nations General Assembly 60th session

The UN General Assembly at its 60th session adopted a large amount of resolutions addressing environmental issues. Of interest in terms of children's environmental health, in a resolution on 'The Rights of the Child' (60/231 of 23 December 2005 – adopted with a vote of 130 in favour and one against), the UN General Assembly expressed its profound concern that the situation of children in many parts of the world remains critical as a result of, *inter alia*, the persistence of poverty, social inequality, inadequate social and economic conditions in an increasingly globalized economic environment, pandemics, in particular HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis, environmental damage, and natural disasters, and expressed its conviction that urgent and effective national and international action is called for.

(6) International Network on Children's Health, Environment and Safety (INCHES)

The INCHES website has moved to www.inchesnetwork.net. INCHES is currently co-ordinating the EU funded project CHEST, Children's Health, Environment and Safety Training. In this project INCHES works in close co-operation with WHO. In the project training modules are being prepared on several topics related to children's environmental health, such as air pollution, allergies, lead exposure, and consumer products. The training modules are written to be used to train medical professionals, public health professionals, but also policy makers. In addition to the preparation of these modules, the CHEST project is also making an inventory of environmental health priorities in the different countries in Europe, and the project is trying to list the institutes and organisations that are giving training on issues related to children's environmental health. A number of INCHES members are involved in writing of the modules. For all other members of INCHES and other people knowledgeable in environmental health and children INCHES requests the following: indication of what topics are most relevant for training in your country; indication of what professions are most relevant to train on environmental health in your country; and the names and addresses of the institutes you know that are currently giving training on environmental health, or fields close to environmental health. INCHES would like to cooperate with them to set up training sessions in the near future. INCHES has a form that will help its members contribute the necessary information, so please contact: INCHES, P.O. Box 163, 6950 AD Dieren, the Netherlands, or email to [Peter van den Hazel](mailto:Peter.van.den.Hazel@inchesnetwork.net).

(7) Linking child health to environment - Indian Academy of Paediatricians

[The Indian Academy of Paediatricians \(IAP\)](#) is drawing attention towards child health through a green campaign. They have named their campaign, 'Environment and Child Health Group.' Paediatricians have raised the issue of air pollution, a major cause for many respiratory diseases. Children are more susceptible to the ill-effects of air pollution because their immune systems and organs are immature, according to T.M. Ananda Kesavan, Department of Paediatrics, Government Medical College, Thrissur. Lungs are not well-formed at birth and it takes about six years for it to fully develop. Man-made changes in

the environment and day-to-day life have an indirect effect on the cause of diseases, says Dr. Ananda Kesavan. Paediatricians say that one per cent increase in children's risk of mortality is owing to respiratory problems, mainly caused by pollutants. Paediatrician S. Sachidananda Kamath says that studies in Europe have reported that acute respiratory infections in children living in most polluted areas is 50 per cent higher than those in least polluted areas. Pollutants in the air affect not only children, but also adults. Pregnant women exposed to high levels of carbon monoxide are at an increased risk of having low birth-weight babies. Studies using newborn rats have shown that exposure to carbon monoxide can cause changes in the heart muscle tissue and other physiological and anatomical changes.

(8) US/EPA: Toxicity and Exposure Assessment for Children's Health (TEACH)

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) launched a searchable database, called [TEACH \(Toxicity and Exposure Assessment for Children's Health\)](#), with over 1,400 references to chemicals that have the potential to affect children's environmental health. The database is designed to improve the information base related to children's environmental health risks by providing a listing and summary of scientific literature applicable to children's health risks due to chemical exposure." TEACH features a list of 16 different chemicals, including arsenic, vinylchloride, and several pesticides. The TEACH Database currently contains over 1,500 summaries from January 1972 to December 2004. These references cover information on environmental contaminants that potentially impact children's health and are updated annually.

(9) Preventing Harm to Growing Brains: US Regional Meeting

Register now for: 'Environmental Contributors to Learning & Developmental Disabilities in Children' - January 21, 2006 - 8:00 am - 4:30 pm

Sponsored by the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy & The Learning and Developmental Disabilities Initiative of the Collaborative on Health and the Environment

A Learning and Developmental Disabilities Initiative Regional Meeting for: educators, parents, children's advocates, researchers, policymakers, health professionals and others.

Hubert H Humphrey Institute, University of Minnesota, Cowles Auditorium, 301 19th Avenue South, Minneapolis

Keynote speakers:

- Leonardo Trasande, MD, MPP is Assistant Professor, Community & Preventive Medicine and Pediatrics at Mt. Sinai Medical Center in New York City and Assistant Director for The Mount Sinai Center for Children's Health and the Environment. He recently authored Public health and economic consequences of methyl mercury toxicity to the developing brain (EHP May, 2005).

- Ted Schettler, MD, MPH is Science Director of the Science and Environmental Health Network. Dr. Schettler is co-author of Generations at Risk: Reproductive Health and the Environment and co-author of In Harm's Way: Toxic Threats to Child Development. Dr. Schettler leads the science work group for the Collaborative on Health and Environment, CHE.

Cost & Registration: Registration fee is \$30, but scholarships are available for students and others. To register and also to request a scholarship, go to www.iatp.org/foodandhealth click on Preventing Harm to Growing Brains. Continuing Ed:

Available for Nurses, Teachers. For more information: Contact Kathleen Schuler, 612-870-3468 or kschuler@iatp.org

(10) Children, Youth and Environments Journal

Volume 15, number 2 of the CYE journal is dedicated to 'Children and Governance'. It contains 21 papers from 12 countries (including two review papers), two nature essays, one photo essay, ten book reviews, and five author responses. Among the topics covered in relation to children and governance: best practices, youth planners, water and sanitation, transportation, housing, school mayors in Iran, education, child impact assessment, children after Hurricane Katrina, and encountering the other in nature. The current issue is available online at: http://www.colorado.edu/journals/cye/15_2/index.htm

(11) EPHA Environment Network: It's our world, our future too: Young people's voices on Environment and Health priorities

[It's our world, our future too: Young people's voices on Environment and Health priorities](#): This seven-minute video contains the voices of young people from Russia, UK and Belgium - and explains why listening to them is important. The children and students describe how the environment is affecting their health, and what they think can be done for a better future. Three themes are highlighted: urban environment and mental health; water, chemicals and air quality; and, other issues, such as racism, drugs and violence. The film ends with European commissioner Margot Wallström saying why the needs of children

have always been her priority as a politician. The full DVD version of the video is available free of charge by e-mailing your request and full contact details to [Monica Guarinoni](#), EEN secretariat.

(12) Vulnerability of the Fetus and Infant to Ambient Pollutants and Reduced Food Intake in Pregnancy - Krakow, Poland, June 2-3, 2006

[‘Vulnerability of the Fetus and Infant to Ambient Pollutants and Reduced Food Intake in Pregnancy’](#) - Krakow, Poland, June 2-3, 2006: The purpose of the Conference is to assess the weight of evidence and assemble new achievements on the effects of prenatal and early postnatal exposure to ambient and indoor pollutants such as polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, particulate matter, and environmental tobacco smoke on fetal/child growth, neurobehavioral development, and childhood health status. Another purpose of this Conference is also to assess fetal responses to the changes in intrauterine environment caused by reduced food intake around the time of conception and during pregnancy.

(13) Saratoga Foundation for Women Worldwide

The Saratoga Foundation for Women Worldwide has established the Pediatric Environmental Health Project to explore the connection between childhood illnesses and environmental toxins. Long-term health effects in lab animals and humans include birth defects, gene mutations, nervous system damage and liver and kidney disease. Pesticides have harmful effects on human immune systems (impairs the ability to fight disease), have neurotoxicity effects (which can impair brain and motor skills), and have negative estrogenicity effects which produces certain cancers. And yet, the U.S. Federal Environmental Protection Agency does not require that chemicals be proven safe prior to use, a dangerous practice we seek to change. For more information see: <http://www.saratogafoundation.org/programs/environ.htm>

ARTICLES

(1) AIR POLLUTION: (a) Outdoor air pollution

[Even infants not spared by asthma](#) With pollution levels reaching alarming levels, medical practitioners are reporting that their asthma patients are getting ever younger, in fact as young as 10 months. Doctors say the villain of the piece is the pollution in our air. If an infant is genetically predisposed to a disease like asthma, pollution acts as a trigger. Mridula Chunduri. [Bombay Times](#), India. 13 December 2005.

[Pollution closes Teheran schools](#) The government closed all schools and kindergartens in Iran's capital city for two days beginning Tuesday because air pollution had reached dangerous levels. [Associated Press](#). 7 December 2005.

[Choking in Tehran](#) [Newsweek](#). 23 December 2005.

[Tehran shut down amid unprecedented smog alert](#) [Agence France-Presse](#). 7 December 2005.

[Tehran being 'poisoned' by smog](#) [Agence France-Presse](#). 12 December 2005.

[Air pollution forces public holiday in Iran](#) [Indo-Asian News Service](#), South Asia. 7 December 2005.

[Tehran schools closed due to smog](#) [BBC](#), UK. 6 December 2005.

[Tehran suffocated by growing smog](#) [Xinhua News Agency](#), China. 13 December 2005.

[Worsening air pollution in Tehran deplored](#) [IranMania](#), Iran. 12 December 2005.

[Durban's poor fight for clean air](#) A 2002 medical study, carried out by Durban's Nelson Mandela School of Medicine and a US university, found that an abnormally high 52% of students and teachers at a primary school bordering the Engen plant suffered from asthma. It found that increases in air pollution tended to aggravate asthma symptoms in children. Grant Clark. [BBC](#). 13 December 2005.

[Parents ask how air pollution affects kids](#) The people who breathe the nation's most unhealthy factory air want to know if their daily dose of toxic pollution is slowing the academic and physical development of their children. Hundreds of thousands of pounds of manganese dust, a heavy metal that can harm the brain and nervous system. David Pace. [Associated Press](#). 15 December 2005.

[Blacks, poor more likely to breathe most unhealthy air](#) Kevin Brown's most feared opponent on the sandlot or basketball court while he was growing up wasn't another kid. It was the polluted air he breathed. David Pace. Associated Press. 13 December 2005.

[Local leaders in the dark on air pollution](#) The health-risk scores created over the last decade to identify communities with potential hazards from industrial air pollution caught many by surprise. "We have one of the highest incidences of childhood asthma in this country right here in Kent County and certainly part of that is related to the air quality." John Heilprin. Associated Press. 23 December 2005.

[Regulations Are Proposed to Cut Back Particulates](#) New air quality regulations intended to reduce modestly sooty pollutants. The particles, some so small that they can penetrate deep into the lungs, pose especially serious risks to children with asthma, frail older people and other vulnerable people. [Registration Required]. Michael Janofsky. New York Times. 21 December 2005.

[Lawmakers disagree on emissions standards](#) Lawmakers are at odds over the enactment of stiffer auto emissions standards. "If you've seen a child leaning forward not able to get air out, their eyes are sort of wide and an anxious mother and dad are standing next to them, you'd have a feeling for this". Tracie Mauriello. Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, Pennsylvania. 13 December 2005.

[Louisville neighborhoods struggle with industrial air pollution](#) Nighttime is rarely restful at Renee Murphy's home, just a short stroll from an industrial strip known as "Rubbertown" on the city's western edge. "It's hard to watch your children gasp for breath," Murphy said from her living room. She blames the family's breathing woes on nearby smokestacks. Bruce Schreiner. Associated Press. 14 December 2005.

[Exhaled Nitric Oxide in Children with Asthma and Short-Term PM2.5 Exposure in Seattle](#) Data from a study in Seattle provides new information concerning the lag structure between PM2.5 exposure and a respiratory health outcome in children with asthma. Therese F. Mar et al. Environmental Health Perspectives. December 2005.

[Polluted air prompts town to close school](#) An elementary school in a small town on the Ohio River, just west of Cincinnati, is closed today after the state confirmed that the air is polluted with toxic chemicals. Spencer Hunt. Columbus Dispatch, Ohio. 7 December 2005.

[School closing in Addyston 'sorrowful'](#) Dan Klepal. Cincinnati Enquirer, Ohio. 7 December 2005.

[Cancer risk closes Addyston school](#) Cincinnati Enquirer, Ohio. 6 December 2005.

[School district switches bus fuel to biodiesel blend](#) The school district recently switched the fuel for its fleet of buses to a blend of diesel and biodiesel, derived from natural oils, in this case, soybeans. The switch has several benefits, including cleaner exhaust and emissions produced by biodiesel fuel. Jared Nelson. Princeton Times Leader, Kentucky. 4 December 2005.

[Parents: Vanuatu volcano sickening kids](#) Mothers at an evacuation center seeking shelter from an erupting volcano on Vanatu said the heat and fumes from the mountain had made their children sick. Isolated cases of flu and diarrhea have broken out in an evacuation center for villagers ordered from their homes after a volcano began erupting. Ray Lilley. Associated Press. 11 December 2005.

(b) Environmental Tobacco Smoke/Smoking

[Few smoking teens realize they die from the inside out](#) Most teenagers' young bodies are initially able to fight back against tobacco's active ingredient, nicotine, a poison so powerful that it is used in pesticides. Young smokers rarely realize they will die from the inside out if they keep it up. Editorial. Las Vegas Sun. 25 December 2005.

[New Montana law brings breath of fresh air to some](#) Montana's commitment to clean indoor air began two months ago, on Oct. 1. Kids can't be in a smoky room — even if the smoke creeps into the room indirectly, even if the business would otherwise qualify for an exemption, and even if the smoke isn't around when the child is. Keila Szpaller. [Great Falls Tribune](#), Montana. 4 December 2005.

[Smoking in movies is as common as it was in 1950](#) The number of such scenes shown in films with US ratings G, PG and PG-13, which children are allowed to watch, has increased since the mid-90s, significantly increasing the number of adolescents who see stars smoking. [New Scientist](#), England. 9 December 2005.

[Consultation on smoking age limit](#) The government is to consult formally next year on a proposal to raise the legal age for buying tobacco in England from 16 to 18. Campaigners argue bringing the law on cigarettes into line with that on alcohol would reduce under-age smoking. [BBC](#), UK. 8 December 2005.

(2) CHEMICALS: (a) General

[Generation Toxic](#) Take a closer look at your 11-year-old son or daughter. They look the picture of health, but may be carrying a cocktail of chemicals around in their young bodies that could affect their reproductive and learning development or cause cancer. [Registration Required]. Catherine Murphy. [Dublin Irish Independent](#), Ireland. 6 December 2005.

[The silent threat of modern times](#) It is likely that in a hundred years, people will look back and shake their heads in disbelief at the way we contaminated our environment and the food chain with an ever expanding list of chemicals. They have counseled pregnant women and women trying to become pregnant against eating certain fish. Professor Alfred Poulos. [Epoch Times](#). 14 December 2005.

[EU ministers approve new law on toxic chemicals](#) Ministers on Tuesday approved a bill to protect the public from toxic chemicals, reaching a deal despite opposition from industry and cries from activists that the measure was too weak. EU said the agreement would avert tens of thousands of cases of infertility, cancer, skin disease and neurological disorders. Jeff Mason. [Reuters](#). 14 December 2005.

[Factbox - all about REACH, the EU chemical reform bill](#) [Reuters](#). 14 December 2005.

[EU agrees controversial chemicals rules](#) [Agence France-Presse](#). 14 December 2005.

[EU backs landmark chemicals law](#) [BBC](#). 13 December 2005.

[US slow to react to possible toxic compounds as Europeans are setting the pace for reforms](#) Like many new Berkeley parents, they try to live as green a life as they can, making as informed a choice on synthetic chemicals as possible. Assemblywoman Chan will resume her effort to ban certain phthalates and chemicals from children's toys. Douglas Fischer. [Oakland Tribune](#), California. 12 December 2005.

[Prenatal Exposure to Polychlorinated Biphenyls and Postnatal Growth: A Structural Analysis](#) A study examining mothers' serum collected 4 decades ago and subsequent growth patterns of their children suggests that prenatal exposure to PCBs may impact growth. The effect depended upon the type of PCB and sex of the child. Matthew Lamb et al. [Environmental Health Perspectives](#). 30 December 2005.

['Digital dumps' heap hazards at foreign sites](#) Hundreds of thousands of used computers, televisions and other electronic components arrive in Nigeria. Open dumps are often in cities and in residential neighborhoods. The pictures show children wandering near smoldering piles of computer and television parts. [Registration Required]. Elizabeth Grossman. [Washington Post](#). 12 December 2005.

[Flame retardants in us all](#) Flame retardants contaminate everyone but concentrate especially in children. PBDE levels in children throughout the United States are possibly much higher than in their parents. Douglas Fischer. [Oakland Tribune](#),

California. 12 December 2005.

[A body's burden](#) A Flash presentation. [Oakland Tribune](#), California. 12 December 2005.

[Washington State May Ban Two Toxic Flame Retardants](#) The Washington State Departments of Ecology and Health are recommending that the state legislature ban certain flame retardants known as PBDEs, which have been found in the environment, foods and people. PBDEs have been measured in blood, fat and breast milk in people around the world. [Environment News Service](#). 5 December 2005.

[Canadian natives blame toxins for fewer sons](#) Tribal reserve is next to country's largest petrochemical region. A sex ratio so out of whack, say scientific experts who helped her reveal the imbalance, almost certainly indicates serious environmental contamination by one or more harmful chemicals. Matt Crenson. [Associated Press](#). 19 December 2005.

[Pollution hits home](#) Dr. Soto began a new area of research that has led her laboratory and others to identify more than 150 chemicals that mimic estrogen, block androgen or otherwise affect hormones. Researchers have found phthalates are associated with androgen-blocking effects in males, including certain hormonal birth defects. Julia Brody. [Burlington Union](#), Massachusetts. 22 December 2005.

[UC report: Chemical damages brain](#) A chemical widely used in baby bottles and other hard, clear plastic containers can cause brain damage even at low doses, according to two studies at the University of Cincinnati. "From other studies it's clear that these low concentrations are in line with human fetal exposures". Tim Bonfield. [Cincinnati Enquirer](#), Ohio. 3 December 2005.

[Reheat on medium-high](#) Mary Anne McNally has been using a microwave, she's picky about the kind of containers she'll put in it. Research suggests at least one type of plasticizer -- the class known as phthalates -- could pose a threat to susceptible populations, such as children who are still growing. [Canadian Press](#). 29 December 2005.

[Chemical Blamed for Mystery Chechen Disease](#) Russian doctors on Friday blamed a chemical found in antifreeze for a mystery disease that has hit dozens of Chechen children, but it remained unclear how they had become affected. [Reuters](#). 28 December 2005.

[Turkmenistan: Mystery Illness Blamed on Chemicals](#) A mystery illness is causing alarm in the Turkmen capital Ashgabat, where residents are afraid that chemicals used on the cotton fields are making them sick. An Ashgabat resident said her entire family fell ill within two days, the youngest first. Soon all the children in her apartment block were sick. [Environment News Service](#). 12 December 2005.

[Oil And Cancer In Ecuador](#) Ecuadoran villagers believe high rates of disease are tied to petroleum pollution, a contention that Chevron disputes. Plaintiffs' attorneys cite a series of health studies in publications. One found that the rate of leukemia in children there was three times higher than in other parts of Ecuador. Joan Kruckewitt. [San Francisco Chronicle](#). 11 December 2005.

[Chemical level 'is worrying'](#) Investigators are concerned about the amount of benzene in the ground in Leftwich and are investigating a possible connection between the deaths of two children from a rare form of leukaemia to the area around their homes. [Northwich Chronicle](#), England. 14 December 2005.

[Environment and cancer: the links are elusive](#) Pinning cancer on trace levels of poisons in the environment is turning out to be a vexing task. She pointed to trace levels of industrial chemicals in drinking water. But the cancer institute and E.P.A. investigated and said what looked like an increase in childhood cancer was a statistical fluke. [Registration Required]. Gina Kolata. [New York Times](#). 13 December 2005.

[Report: Don't kid yourself - contaminants persist in the Great Lakes](#) Toxic chemical concentrations in the Great Lakes remain a threat to humans, animals and fish - not enough people know of the hazards. Women of child-bearing age are at increased

risk. A single advisory could cover PCBs, dioxins, pesticides and methylmercury. Sarah Kellogg. [Booth Newspapers](#), Michigan. 8 December 2005.

[Did sitting on a stepdad's knee lead to death?](#) Last April Mr Welch died at the age of 32, the youngest known victim in Britain of mesothelioma, the lung cancer associated with asbestos, which can take decades to manifest itself and which has been classified as a disease of the elderly because its growth is so slow. Alan Hamilton. [London Times](#), England. 16 December 2005.

[Boy contracted fatal asbestosis playing on his father's knee](#) Nick Britten. [London Daily Telegraph](#), England. 15 December 2005.

[Landmark asbestos inquest opens](#) [London Guardian](#), England. 14 December 2005.

[DuPont Settles Charges That It Hid Toxic Risk Data](#) The company found PFOA in the bloodstream of its female workers and at least one of their fetuses in 1981. The chemical was also detected in a 2-year-old child. It moved female employees out of areas where the chemical was being used and told them to consult doctors before becoming pregnant. Marla Cone. [Los Angeles Times](#). 15 December 2005.

[Inside Pentagon's fight to limit regulation of military pollutant](#) A high-stakes battle over how much perchlorate is too much takes unusual twists as the Pentagon criticizes its own study when data support stronger standards. EPA determined that perchlorate endangers babies' brain development even at trace levels. [Subscription Required]. Peter Waldman. [Wall Street Journal](#). 29 December 2005.

[Ruskin focuses on toxins' effects on state's schools](#) An effort to require the state to study the effects of toxic sites on nearby public schools has caught the ear of Assemblyman Ira Ruskin, D-Redwood City. Josh Wein. [San Francisco Examiner](#), California. 6 December 2005.

[State using schools to clean up tainted sites](#) A national environmental activist group said New Jersey has built in a de facto incentive for municipal and education officials to build schools on polluted land. Jason Method. [Asbury Park Press](#), New Jersey. 6 December 2005.

[District mulls tainted sites for schools](#) The LA school district's aggressive push to build schools is leading officials to consider campuses in dense, industrial and residential neighborhoods, often requiring extensive cleanup and relocation costs. [Registration Required]. Joel Rubin. [Los Angeles Times](#), California. 12 December 2005.

[Report on contaminated sites targets Keith, NBHS](#) A report from a national nonprofit environmental group singles out the Keith Middle School and New Bedford High School sites as case studies of how state environmental laws are being ignored. Aaron Nicodemus. [New Bedford Standard-Times](#), Massachusetts. 9 December 2005.

(b) Lead

[Sub-Saharan Africa phases out leaded gasoline](#) UNEP announced that January 1, sub-Saharan Africa's vehicle fuels will be lead-free, thus a promise made 3 years ago to rid the region of leaded gasoline has been met. Lead, a notorious heavy metal, is linked with a wide range of ailments and ill health including damage to the brains of babies and young children. [Angola Press](#), Angola. 28 December 2005.

[No more lead in petrol from January](#) [Johannesburg Independent](#), South Africa. 31 December 2005.

[Sub-Saharan Africa meets deadline for lead-free petrol](#) [Agence France-Presse](#). 27 December 2005.

[Africa phases out leaded fuel, glitches remain](#) Ed Stoddard. [Reuters](#). 27 December 2005.

[Leaded Fuel to be Phased Out in Sub-Saharan Africa](#) Cathy Majtenyi. [Voice of America](#). 28 December 2005.

[Sub-Saharan Africa Phases Out Leaded Fuel, U.N. Environment Agency Says](#) [Associated Press](#). 28 December 2005.

[Africa switches to unleaded fuel](#) BBC. 27 December 2005.

[Cape motorists get some good news](#) Dominique Herman. Cape Town Cape Times, South Africa. 7 December 2005.

[In Peru, a poisoned town, a driven man](#) The massive metallurgical complex owned by St. Louis-based Doe Run is the biggest employer and the biggest source of pollution in the community. Virtually every child is lead poisoned. "All the kids were coughing," he said. "I remember thinking this must be the most polluted town in Peru." Craig Cheatham. Dallas Morning News, Texas. 5 December 2005.

[Toxins affecting residents near metallurgical plant in Peru](#) Ken Leiser. St. Louis Post-Dispatch, Missouri. 7 December 2005.

[US-Run Smelter in Peru Harming Children - Scientists](#) Reuters. 7 December 2005.

[Research Team Finds More Toxic Contamination around U.S.-Owned Smelter in Peru](#) Rick Vecchio. Associated Press. 7 December 2005.

[Reduced Intellectual Development in Children with Prenatal Lead Exposure](#) The study, carried out in Mexico City, found no evidence of a threshold. The steepest part of the dose-response curve was within the first few µg/dL of blood lead, indicating that much of the damage is already occurring at the lower levels of exposure. Lourdes Schnaas et al. Environmental Health Perspectives. 29 December 2005.

[The lead settlement](#) WHO analysis shows that 40 children and pregnant women are suffering from lead poisoning in a Roma refugee camp in Kosovo. This year a small girl fell ill. The culprit was lead poisoning she was found to have a very high concentration of the heavy metal in her bloodstream. Sebiha Bajrami and Gezim Baxhaku. Beta News Agency, Serbia. 13 December 2005.

[Lead poisoning still a U.S. problem](#) While lead-based paint and gasoline have not been sold in the United States for more than 25 years, lead poisoning is still a problem for U.S. children. United Press International. 6 December 2005.

[Screening, prevention can ease ills of lead poisoning](#) Lead is the most widely scattered toxic metal in the world and the most common environmental toxin for children. Toddlers are most at risk since they can eat dust, dirt and paint chips that contain lead. Their brains are more sensitive early in development. Dr. Grant Morrow. Columbus Dispatch, Ohio. 6 December 2005.

[New Requirements Proposed for Lead-Based Paint Work](#) To reduce lead poisonings in children across the country, EPA is proposing new requirements for contractors and construction professionals when working in homes that contain lead-based paint. Press Release. US Environmental Protection Agency. 29 December 2005.

[Doctors debate level at which lead becomes harmful](#) No one disputes that lead is unsafe. The discussion is over where to set the bar: At what level do the harmful effects of lead poisoning begin? The federal government now says 10 micrograms of lead per deciliter of blood should cause concern. Kawanza Newson. Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, Wisconsin. 6 December 2005.

[A clean start for Ashley](#) Kawanza Newson. Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, Wisconsin. 6 December 2005.

[Leaning on the landlords](#) Jamaal Abdul-Alim. Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, Wisconsin. 6 December 2005.

[Lead still lurks](#) Jamaal Abdul-Alim. Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, Wisconsin. 4 December 2005.

[Lead in your house? Here's what to do.](#) Jamaal Abdul-Alim. Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, Wisconsin. 4 December 2005.

[Establishment should back off from lead paint legislation](#) Michael Rosen. Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, Wisconsin. Opinion, 4 December 2005.

[Costly, necessary solutions](#) While both sides in the lead paint lawsuits fight it out in the courts and the Legislature, behind the scenes the toxic substance continues to exact a terrible toll on thousands of Milwaukee's poorest children. Editorial. Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, Wisconsin. 6 December 2005.

[Lead Paint Still Kills](#) Rochester City Council votes Tuesday night on a plan to help reduce the danger of lead paint in older homes, but the plan is controversial because some say it doesn't require testing for the very fine particles of lead that children are most likely to ingest. Jane Flasch. [Rochester WHAM TV](#), New York. 21 December 2005.

[Stronger law on lead urged](#) Brian Sharp. [Rochester Democrat and Chronicle](#), New York. 14 December 2005.

[Lawmaker urges better rules on lead](#) A New Jersey congressman, declaring that federal standards for treatment and abatement of childhood lead poisoning are senseless, urged the federal government yesterday to change its policies so children can get help sooner. Judy Peet. [Newark Star-Ledger](#), New Jersey. 6 December 2005.

[Landlords challenge new lead paint law](#) A judge heard a challenge to Rhode Island's new lead paint law from a group of landlords who say it unfairly exempts a segment of property owners. Patricia Nolan testified about the state's efforts to combat childhood lead poisoning. "Our goal is to protect all children from lead poisoning". Eric Tucker. [Associated Press](#). 8 December 2005.

[City has high hopes for lead abatement](#) City officials are hopeful that a recently received grant will go a long way to abating lead in city homes, educating residents about the risks of lead and protecting young children from lead poisoning. Franchone Fraser-Ben Reuben Bey. [New Britain Herald](#), Connecticut. 28 December 2005.

[Tougher standards on lead levels sought](#) Federal and state officials are not doing enough to protect Boston residents from lead-tainted drinking water. Exposure to lead can cause serious health problems, such as kidney damage and high blood pressure. Children are particularly vulnerable to lead, which can impair their physical and mental development. Cristina Silva. [Boston Globe](#). 2 December 2005.

[Tougher penalties for breaking rules on lead suggested](#) Owners of buildings with lead-based paint could face stiffer penalties for noncompliance with the Lead Poisoning Prevention Act if lawmakers agree. "Lead poisoning is entirely preventable," said Anita Weinberg, council co-chairwoman. "Most children are poisoned in their own homes." Ginger Wheeler. [Chicago Tribune](#). 1 December 2005.

[LaHood bill helps pay for lead removal](#) U.S. Rep. Ray LaHood introduced legislation Wednesday that would provide a tax credit to landlords and homeowners for lead mitigation. The credit would be geared toward properties that have children younger than 6, women of child-bearing age, low-income residents and buildings constructed before 1960. [Peoria Journal Star](#), Illinois. 8 December 2005.

[Manchester wants lead-free older housing](#) City health officials and other advocates have set a goal to make 75 percent of Manchester's old housing stock lead-safe in five years, which they said would cut lead poisoning cases among children and costs associated with the ailment. Benjamin Kepple. [Manchester Union Leader](#), New Hampshire. 6 December 2005.

[Grant carries Bellows Falls' lead paint safety education](#) A \$40,000 grant will allow a nonprofit healthcare agency to continue educating landlords and contractors on the hazards of lead paint in a community that has the state's highest per capita rate of lead poisoning in children. Daniel Barlow. [Rutland Herald](#), Vermont. 19 December 2005.

[Vermont confronts lead crisis](#) Howard Weiss-Tisman. [Brattleboro Reformer](#), Vermont. 16 December 2005.

[Lead hazard reemerges in post-Katrina New Orleans](#) Will the rebuilding of New Orleans take advantage of the opportunity to improve children's health? When Hurricane Katrina's floodwaters receded, they left behind a coating of sludge on the yards, homes, and cars. New research reveals it contains troubling levels of lead. Janet Pelley. [Environmental Science & Technology](#). 15 December 2005.

[Household cleaners are safe for lead dust removal](#) Research indicates that any general cleaner will effectively remove lead-contaminated dust. For decades, scientists have known that lead causes neurological problems in young children. And a new

study finds that lead poisoning may have been the cause of death and suffering by Beethoven. Paul Thacker. [Environmental Science & Technology](#). 8 December 2005.

[Dangerous Levels Of Lead Found In Christmas Decorations](#) With the holiday season in full swing, many people might not realize that the Christmas lights that they are decking the halls with might contain dangerous levels of lead. Expert Suggest Some Lights Be Kept From Kids. [Madison WISC TV](#), Wisconsin. 8 December 2005.

[Kid's necklaces, zipper pulls recalled](#) A serious risk of lead poisoning has prompted the recall of about 6 million children's necklaces and zipper pulls. Lead builds up in the body and is toxic to humans. Lead is especially harmful to infants and young children. Even low levels of lead can cause learning disabilities, behavioral problem and slow growth. [Eureka Times-Standard](#), California. 7 December 2005.

[State studying risks of lead in lunchboxes](#) Fears of exposing kids to lead shed by vinyl lunchboxes prompted state officials to take steps Thursday to remove the products from store shelves in Washington. [Seattle Post-Intelligencer](#), Washington. 16 December 2005.

[FDA could lower candy lead limit](#) The U.S. FDA announced a proposal yesterday to reduce the threshold for lead in candy. Elevated blood lead levels can cause hearing loss, brain damage and behavior problems in children. Kelly Brewington. [Baltimore Sun](#), Maryland. 23 December 2005.

[Cribs recalled for high lead content](#) The Humboldt County Public Health Department has announced that a crib sold at Toys 'R Us for the past year has been recalled to avoid lead poisoning. Lead based paints have been outlawed in the United States since 1978, but occasionally products from other countries slip by. Ann Johnson-Stromberg. [Eureka Times-Standard](#), California. 1 December 2005.

(c) Pesticides

[Asthma in Young Children-Prenatal DDE Exposure May Increase Risk](#) A [longitudinal study](#) now shows that prenatal exposure may provide the fundamental window for asthma susceptibility linked to DDT. The researchers suggest that their results be considered when evaluating the risk of spraying DDT in antimalaria campaigns. Kris Freeman. [Environmental Health Perspectives](#). December 2005.

[Sick young farmers](#) The misuse of herbicides and pesticides has resulted in high rates of infection and disease among children working in the agricultural sector. Many children don't use any protection means during spraying the plants with insecticides. The direct and constant exposure to dust causes respiratory diseases. Amel Mohammed Alariqi Sadam Al-Ashmoree [Yemen Times](#). 1 December 2005.

[Scientists union opposes EPA's pesticide-test plan](#) The union representing scientists at the EPA added its voice yesterday to critics who are protesting the agency's proposed rule for human experimentation in testing pesticides. Sen. Barbara Boxer said it would allow the EPA to consider unethical tests on pregnant women, infants and children. Andrew Schneider. [Baltimore Sun](#), Maryland. 8 December 2005.

[Organophosphate Urinary Metabolite Levels during Pregnancy and after Delivery in Women Living in an Agricultural Community](#) Both prenatal and postpartum metabolite levels were higher in pregnant, low-income women in the Salinas Valley, an agricultural area, than in a sample of women of childbearing age in the general population. Asa Bradman et al. [Environmental Health Perspectives](#). December 2005.

[Pesticide woes draw legislators' attention](#) Pesticides have emerged as a top concern of a committee of the Florida state legislature focused on the fate of farm and nursery workers. In March, The Palm Beach Post published a story about three children born with birth defects in the farm town of Immokalee, all within seven weeks of each other. John Lantigua. [Palm Beach Post](#), Florida. 25 December 2005.

[Carlitos, a farmworkers' son with no limbs, turns 1](#) Christine Evans. Palm Beach Post, Florida. 18 December 2005.

[Pesticides: Speed up progress](#) An expected state DoA rule could bring the state a small step forward into a new realm of protection from pesticide sprays. The plan would require advance notification when the most dangerous pesticides are sprayed next to a school, hospital, nursing home or state-licensed adult or child day care center. Editorial. Seattle Post-Intelligencer. 26 December 2005.

[State backs off rule on advance pesticide spray notice](#) Washington State withdrew a controversial proposal Friday that would have required orchardists to give two days written notice before spraying certain pesticides near schools, hospitals, nursing homes and state-licensed adult or child day-care centers. Leah Beth Ward. Yakima Herald Republic, Washington. 31 December 2005.

[Schools, others won't get special pesticide notices](#) [Registration Required]. Curt Woodward. Associated Press. 31 December 2005.

[California Finds Lawn Chemical Dangerous to Health](#) Concerned that certain widely used lawn chemicals can cause birth defects, the state of California is taking steps to require that consumers are informed about these risks. PANNA. 21 December 2005.

[Ozone Outlaw: U.S. Continues Major Methyl Bromide Use](#) A special report for the International Day of No Pesticide Use. Methyl bromide levels at Pajaro Middle School in Watsonville, where most students are of Mexican descent, were found to be seven times higher than the level considered safe for children over a seven to eight-week period. Panups. PANNA. 14 December 2005.

[Buggin' out](#) When it comes to pests, one health concern is allergies to dust. These infestations often take the form of mice or cockroaches, which can bring on severe asthma attacks in children. The second health concern is the pesticide chemicals used to control the infestations. [Purchase Required]. Galen Moore. Newton Daily News Tribune, Massachusetts. 19 December 2005.

(d) Mercury

[NAFTA Secretariat Deems U.S. Mercury Emissions Worth Investigating](#) CEC said that it intends to investigate the US for failing to enforce the federal Clean Water Act against coal-fired power plants with respect to mercury discharges to air and water. "It is a welcome step ... to protect the health of our at-risk mothers and children in the U.S. and Canada." Environment News Service. 14 December 2005.

[States fight emission rule](#) Illinois and 14 other states are challenging the Bush administration's proposal for regulating mercury emissions from power plants, arguing the rule fails to adequately protect Americans. Coal-fired power plants are the largest manmade sources of mercury, which can cause learning disabilities in children. Michael Hawthorne. Chicago Tribune, Illinois. 20 December 2005.

[Clean up the mercury](#) The federal government ought to be ashamed that as many as 20 states are ready to take quicker action on mercury emissions than federal officials are. Mercury in fish can cause developmental problems in fetuses and young children. Editorial. Dickinson Herlad, Tennessee. 2 December 2005.

[Curtailing mercury requires more work outside state](#) Mercury has been used for medical procedures, tooth fillings, pesticides, paints, thermometers and electric switches. Since it's a developmental neurotoxin and easily passed from a pregnant woman to her fetus, it's important to keep mercury in the environment to a minimum. Sheryl Corrigan. St. Paul Pioneer Press, Minnesota. Opinion, 8 December 2005.

[Ten threats: Mercury and health problems](#) Fish are generally considered part of a healthy diet, but not all fish are entirely safe. That's because of mercury. Coal-burning power plants emit mercury, which eventually settles into the Great Lakes. Then, aquatic microorganisms convert the substance into methyl mercury. Julie Halpert. [Great Lakes Radio Consortium](#), Michigan. 5 December 2005.

[The Age of Autism: 'A pretty big secret'](#) Thousands of children cared for by Homefirst Health Services in Chicago have at least two things in common with thousands of Amish children in rural Lancaster: They have never been vaccinated. And they don't have autism. Dan Olmsted. [United Press International](#). 8 December 2005.

[The Age of Autism: The story so far](#) Dan Olmsted. [United Press International](#). 18 December 2005.

[The Age of Autism: Missing in Mississippi](#) We introduced ourselves to the brother of Donald T., the first person ever diagnosed with autism. The theory -- rejected by federal health authorities and most scientists -- is that in most cases autism is actually a form of mercury poisoning. Dan Olmsted. [United Press International](#). 20 December 2005.

[The Secret Truth](#) Parents used to accept routine vaccinations for their children without a second thought. But as more parents weigh the benefits of vaccination against the possible risks, some are hesitating, even resisting, those shots. Jared read about a possible connection between autism and a mercury-based vaccine preservative called thimerosal. Dr. Darshak Sanghavi. [Boston Globe](#). 7 December 2005.

[Vaccine additive banned in Iowa](#) Earlier this year, the state became the first in the nation to ban the use of preservatives in childhood vaccines. Since Iowa's ban, California has followed suit and more than 30 other states have similar bans under consideration. Rachele Treiber. [Davenport Quad City Times](#), Iowa. 6 December 2005.

[Seafood Health Benefits Outweigh Toxic Risks, Scientists Say](#) Eating seafood reduces risk for sudden death due to heart disease. Warnings by EPA and FDA indicate that pregnant women and nursing mothers should avoid fish containing high levels of methyl mercury, a toxin that can cause neurological damage to developing fetuses and young children. [Environment News Service](#). 7 December 2005.

[Mercury risk should be assessed](#) In recent years, there have been quite a number of incidents concerning environmental pollution and food contamination in Taiwan. The general public still hold the belief that eating fish, especially deep-sea fish, is good for your health and good for pregnant women and children. Han Bo-cheng. [Taipei Times](#), Taiwan. 29 December 2005.

[Hold the fish, please](#) "Mercury is one of the most dangerous metals. It is a powerful toxin on the brain and neurological system and can cause kidney and lung damage. It is classified as possibly causing cancer. Fetuses and young children are particularly vulnerable to mercury because of their rapidly developing brains." John Ehinger. [Mobile Register](#), Alabama. 6 December 2005.

[Stricter mercury rules warranted](#) Editorial. [Montgomery Advertiser](#), Alabama. 7 December 2005.

[State set to toughen fish mercury standards](#) Katherine Bouma. [Mobile Register](#), Alabama. 3 December 2005.

[How safe is tuna?](#) The tuna industry has failed to adequately warn consumers about the risks of eating canned tuna. The government has recommended that children and pregnant women eat canned light tuna because it generally contains less mercury than canned albacore does. Sam Roe/Michael Hawthorne. [Chicago Tribune](#), Illinois. 13 December 2005.

[FDA to check tuna](#) The FDA will investigate whether tens of millions of cans of tuna sold each year contain potentially hazardous levels of mercury. mercury can harm the developing central nervous system, young children and fetuses are most at risk. Children exposed to dangerous levels of mercury can suffer subtle learning difficulties. Sam Roe. [Chicago Tribune](#), Illinois. 31 December 2005.

[U.S. safety net in tatters](#) Sam Roe/Michael Hawthorne. [Chicago Tribune](#), Illinois. 12 December 2005.

[How to minimize risks of mercury](#) Sam Roe/Michael Hawthorne. Chicago Tribune, Illinois. 12 December 2005.

[Toxic risk on your plate](#) Sam Roe/Michael Hawthorne. Chicago Tribune, Illinois. 11 December 2005.

(3) WATER AND SANITATION

[Dirty water, sanitation kill thousands daily: Experts](#) Unsafe drinking water and poor sanitation kill 4,000 children every day, experts said. "There should be an outcry, from the health community above all, for immediate, concerted efforts to confront the reality that sanitation coverage rates in the developing world barely keep pace with population growth," said WHO. PakTribune. 20 December 2005.

[Study blames illnesses on lack of clean drinking water](#) Water contamination is the main source of water-borne diseases common in Yemen. 75% of Yemen's 20 million population is threatened by water-borne diseases, such as malaria, due to unclean drinking water. About 50% of children's deaths are caused by diarrhoea and 30% by malaria and typhoid. UN IRIN. 27 December 2005.

[300 million Chinese drink unsafe water](#) About 300 million people living in China's vast countryside drink unsafe water tainted by chemicals and other contaminants, the government said Thursday in its latest acknowledgment of mounting risks from widespread pollution. About 90 percent of China's cities have polluted ground water. Elaine Kurtenbach. Associated Press. 2 January 2006.

[Students in Harbin are back in school](#) Hundreds of thousands of students returned to class after water was declared to be safe to drink following a chemical spill that forced a water supply shutdown. The city's 400,000 primary and middle school students are being advised to bring their meals from home, as most parents remain skeptical about water safety. People's Daily, China. 1 December 2005.

[Filtering Provides Inexpensive Way to Clean Water](#) It's a familiar story in developing countries. At least 1 billion people worldwide drink water that contains bacteria, viruses, parasites and sometimes chemical pollutants. "It's always the children that capture my heart," " you see them drinking this water that makes them sick, and often it kills them." Jon Hamilton. National Public Radio. 8 December 2005.

[Pharma factories poison village water](#) For 20 years, Toansa struggled to cope with debilitating industrial pollution. The village is staring at a bleak and parched future. Already, the entire village has skin diseases, children have asthma and men and women complain of nausea and headache. It is not just poison under the ground, even the air is highly contaminated. Bombay Times of India. 6 December 2005.

[A National Assessment of Tap Water Quality](#) More than 140 contaminants with no enforceable safety limits found in US's drinking water. EWG strongly urge that federal laws and policies be reformed to ensure that vulnerable populations, including pregnant women and children, are protected from chemicals. Press Release. Environmental Working Group. 20 December 2005.

(4) MISCELLANEOUS (a) General

[World Health Body Links Ecosystem Injury to Human Health Problems](#) WHO's "[Ecosystems and Human Well-being: Health Synthesis](#)." Deforestation endangers health - intensifying the effects of natural disasters, with reduced crop yields. This impairs the nutritional status of households and diet deficiencies harm children's physical and mental development. Environment News Service. 9 December 2005.

[UN warns against unsustainable use of nature's gifts](#) Bombay Financial Express, India. 12 December 2005.

[Ecosystem Changes a Threat to Human Health](#) Reuters. 12 December 2005.

[WHO says decline of ecosystems threatens human health](#) Associated Press. 9 December 2005.

[Pollution: A life and death issue](#) Diseases carried in water are responsible for 80% of illnesses and deaths in developing countries, killing a child every eight seconds. Each year 2.1 million people die from diarrhoeal diseases associated with poor water. WHO says 3 million people are killed worldwide by outdoor air pollution annually. Alex Kirby. [BBC](#). 13 December 2005.

(b) Climate Change

[Warming Will Lead to Major Disease Outbreaks, Experts Warn](#) Disease outbreaks in humans are likely to increase as global climate change reshapes the world's ecosystems, a recent report suggests. According to the report, 3,000 African children die each day from malaria, and climate change is making the disease even more virulent. Nicholas Bakalar. [National Geographic](#) 2 December 2005.

[150,000 deaths blamed on climate change](#) U.N. calls toll conservative. Study finds poor nations hit hardest. They're real victims, estimates of the people who died around the world in 2000 because global warming triggered heat waves, floods or droughts, or made worse some infectious disease. Peter Calamai. [Toronto Star](#). 9 December 2005.

[Climate Change Threatens Southern Africa's Food Security](#) Climate changes have led to a drastic fall in agricultural production in Malawi and other southern African countries delegates to the ongoing UN climate change conference are learning. Singy Hanyona. [Environment News Service](#). 6 December 2005.

[Climate Change Impacting Hard On Semi-Arid Sahel Nations](#) 3 decades of increasingly patchy rains and drought are taking a heavy toll on the people of the Sahel nations, according to a group of scientists and specialists on climate change. The longer dry periods between rain are also affecting water quality and creating new health risks, in particular cholera outbreaks. [UN IRIN](#). 13 December 2005.

[Health and climate change: a call for action](#) The health sector has to become proactive. Climate change is affecting human health in Europe. Human health will continue to be affected directly and indirectly by climate change, and health systems will need to act to prevent and manage the impacts on populations. [Purchase Required]. Bettina Menne/Roberto Bertollini. [British Medical Journal](#). 3 December 2005.

[Pacific Islanders become first official climate refugees](#) Rising seas and frequent flooding have forced a community in Vanuatu to leave their homes. Over recent years rates of flooding have increased, triggering a variety of problems including increased malaria and skin diseases among children as a result of more standing water for mosquitoes to breed in. David Hopkins. [Edie News](#). 7 December 2005.

[Europe's health woes may worsen with global warming](#) Poor nations are the hardest hit. Hotter temperatures can cause widespread crop failure and drought. There is also evidence that warmer temperatures are spreading tick-borne encephalitis in Europe and may increase the risk of malaria, one of the most deadly diseases in developing countries. Mary Milliken. [Reuters](#). 5 December 2005.

[Have a hot, dry, stormy life, kids](#) The conveniences we use today have serious consequences for our children and grandchildren. Diseases and pests that have been kept in check by limiting temperatures are on the move. Nikita Lopoukhine. [International Herald Tribune](#). 13 December 2005.

[Choking in Montreal](#) The Bush administration wrapped up a Montreal weekend conference on global warming by telling the rest of the world and New York, in so many words, to go choke themselves. "I think it's crazy for us to play games with our children's future," said former President Bill Clinton. Editorial. [White Plains Journal News](#), New York. 13 December 2005.

(c) Americas

[SDSU part of largest children's health study](#) South Dakota State University will be one of seven national research centers to participate in the largest long-term study of children's health ever conducted in the United States, which seeks to find the environment's effects on human health and development. Randy Hascall. [Sioux Falls Argus Leader](#), South Dakota. 6 December 2005.

[Health of Pennsylvania children to be studied for 21 years](#) Montgomery County has been chosen as one of eight locations that will generate detailed data for a 21-year comprehensive study of children's health. "You hear about things like cancer clusters and concerns about how the environment affects health, but we don't have the data to support it." [Pottstown Mercury](#), Pennsylvania. 11 December 2005.

[New Orleans unhealthy, groups say](#) NRDC, one of the nation's largest environmental groups, and several local Louisiana environmental groups said that heavy metals, petroleum components and pesticides in the dusty residue left behind by Hurricane Katrina's floodwaters pose such a risk that families with children shouldn't return until it is cleaned up. Tom Kenworthy. [USA Today](#). 2 December 2005.

[Toxin levels higher than normal in 11 Coast areas](#) Mike Keller. [Biloxi Sun Herald](#), Mississippi. 6 December 2005.

[New Orleans Soil Poses Hazard](#) [Registration Required]. Hazard David Brown. [Washington Post](#). 15 December 2005.

[The need for healthier schools](#) No one knows how many New York City school buildings still contain asbestos; records at the Department of Education are incomplete. Poor environmental conditions in schools sicken students, teachers and staff, and inhibit academic performance. [Gotham Gazette](#), New York. 12 December 2005.

[Children and nature belong together](#) Experiences in nature are critical for children to grow into healthy, creative, confident adults. In his latest book *Last Child in the Woods: Saving our children from nature-deficit Disorder*, Richard Louv makes a compelling case for heading outside with our kids. Connie Brockman. [Cincinnati Enquirer](#). 8 December 2005.

(d) Asia

[China's environmental health challenges](#) Several million people burn raw coal in un-vented stoves. Toxic compounds permeate their homes and negatively affect the health of children and adults alike. Because children's immune system and detoxification mechanisms are not fully developed, toxic agents have a more serious impact on them than on adults. Dr. Cesar Chelala. [Japan Times](#). 5 December 2005.

[Students sick of allergies in Garden City](#) At least 1 in 2 school students suffer from allergies and 16% suffer from asthma, thanks to pollution, says an environment report. It recommends a Plan for Bangalore with focus on water conservation, remodeling of storm water drains, abatement of air and sound pollution through public transport, use of LPG and penalties. [Bombay Times of India](#). 4 December 2005.
