

## HECANET January 2005

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#### ARTICLES

A new English study which concluded that most childhood cancers are "probably" down to prenatal exposure to industrial and environmental pollutants, most likely to have been inhaled by the mother during pregnancy, received a great deal of press coverage. The study compared birth and death records of children who had died from cancer with a chemical emissions map of Britain. A similar technique was used by a researcher in the US, who looked at hospitalization rates for respiratory disease by ZIP (area) codes. Another study that was widely covered linked fine-particle air to the births of smaller babies. As in previous months a large portion of media articles dealing with children's environmental health covered chemical issues, including new European legislation (REACH), the effects of industrial emissions (in Central Asia and India), and chemicals in cleaning and cosmetic products. Attention was also devoted to rocket fuel, both in Kazakhstan (causing illness in villages near a rocket launch site) and the US (focusing on a review of recommended limits on perchlorate in drinking water). The media continued to cover the toll and recovery effort related to the December 2004 tsunami disaster in Asia, including health and environment aspects. Articles focused on the risks of waterborne disease and malaria among survivors, especially children, but commentators also drew attention to the fact that in a month, the immediate loss of life associated with the tsunami will likely be surpassed by those dying from drinking unsafe water, most of them children. Summaries of articles grouped under the following themes appear below, with links to their full texts:

- (1) **AIR POLLUTION:** (a) **Indoor air pollution**, (b) **Outdoor air pollution** (c) **Asthma**
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- (4) **ASIAN TSUNAMI/QUAKE**
- (5) **MISCELLANEOUS**

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**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 recently finalized its issue briefs series. These briefs are now [available for download on the HECA web-site](#) on the following children's environmental health topics: accidents and injuries, air pollution, chemicals, human settlements, lead, pesticides, vector-borne diseases, and water and sanitation.

### **(2) WHO Indoor Air Pollution Activities**

[WHO's Programme on Indoor Air Pollution](#) and a number of partners will be presenting a series of seminars entitled 'Smoke in the Kitchen: Health impacts of indoor air pollution in developing countries' to raise awareness among governments, international development organizations, and private corporations of the health impacts of indoor air pollution from household energy use, and enhance global action to reduce people's exposure to this substantial environmental health risk. Indoor air pollution affects poor women and small children far more than any other sectors of society, killing almost 1 million children under five every year. One seminar will be hosted by the UN Development Programme (UNDP) on 8 February in New York, and one will be hosted by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency on 9 February in Washington D.C.

### **(3) WHO-UNEP Health Environment Linkages Initiative (HELI)**

[HELI](#) is a global effort by WHO and UNEP to promote and facilitate action in developing countries to reduce environmental threats to human health, in support of sustainable development objectives. HELI supports a more coherent approach to valuing the services that ecosystems provide to human health as part of decision-making processes. More details on the HELI Initiative goals and activities are available in its newly published [HELI brochure](#) or from the joint WHO-UNEP [HELI Secretariat](#). The brochure clearly articulates the links between health and environment, and the toll that environmental factors can have on child health, noting for example that, "Every minute, 5 children in developing countries die from malaria or diarrhoea. Every hour, 100 more children die as a result of exposure to indoor smoke from solid fuels"; "Malaria kills over 1.2 million people annually, mostly African children under the age of five"; and "Lead exposure kills more than 230 000 people per year and causes cognitive effects in one third of all children globally; more than 97% of those affected live in the developing world". There are clear synergies between the objectives and activities of HELI and HECA, both WSSD partnerships, and WHO and UNEP are working to ensure that these two initiatives interact.

#### **(4) UNEP - Children's World Summit for the Environment**

UNEP and the Aichi Prefectural Government of Japan will host the first [Children's World Summit for the Environment](#) in Toyohashi and Toyota cities, Japan, from 26 to 29 July 2005. The Summit will bring together up to 1,000 children, aged 10 to 14 years, and adult chaperones to review the implications of environmental problems to their livelihood. The Summit will endeavour to increase children's understanding of environmental issues through the sharing of experiences and opinions and will provide an opportunity for them to collectively voice their concerns for the environment. It will also inspire them to initiate and implement community environmental projects and to remove ethnic barriers while creating new relationships that will last well beyond the Summit.

#### **(5) UN Millennium Project**

The report of the UN Millennium Project, "[Investing in Development: A Practical Plan to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals](#)", was launched on 17 January. The Project, commissioned by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan and led by economist Jeffrey Sachs, has developed a global plan on how the world can, by 2015, meet the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). One of the eight MDGs is specifically related to the environment. The report, three years in the making, offers a comprehensive strategy for combating global poverty, hunger and disease, designed by 265 of the world's leading scientists and development experts. It contains a package of specific cost-effective measures that together could cut extreme poverty in half and radically improve the lives of at least 1 billion people by 2015.

[The Millennium Project's environment report](#) maintains that without a healthy and secure environment many of the other goals will be tough to achieve and underlines the vital link between environment and defeating poverty. It makes a series of key recommendations on how to reverse the loss of forests and plant and animal species and restore healthy land, air and water in order to meet the Goals and the World Summit on Sustainable Development's (WSSD) Plan of Implementation drawn up more than two years ago in Johannesburg, South Africa.

The environment report directly refers to child health in a number of sections, noting for example that "gastro-intestinal diseases, strongly linked to unsafe water and environmental degradation, are the leading killer of children under five", and that, "indoor air pollution, generated by cooking fuels, causes respiratory disease, birth defects, and other illnesses among the estimated 2.4 billion people that burn biomass and coal in their homes, killing nearly 2.5 million children each year". [The Millennium Project's report on child health and maternal health](#) also underlines the importance of a healthy environment, noting for example that, "Interventions that are implemented outside the health sector, such as improvements in the quantity and quality of water or improvements in environmental conditions, play a role [in reducing child mortality]".

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## **ARTICLES**

### **(1) AIR POLLUTION: (a) Indoor air pollution**

[Hidden killer stalking villages](#) The briquette fumes inhaled since childhood are full of poison from the arsenic-rich coal produced in part of the province. The man is in the latter stages of arsenic poisoning and cannot expect to live more than another six months. But at least he knows his children will be spared a similar fate, thanks to the new stove (funded by UNICEF). China Daily. 26 January 2005.

[Breathing Easy: Air fresheners, aerosols can damage health of babies, moms](#) Some of the latest findings in air quality: A study found air fresheners and aerosols can damage the health of babies and their mothers. Frequent use during pregnancy and early childhood was linked with diarrhea and earache in infants. Mark R. Sneller. Tucson Citizen, Arizona. 18 January 2005.

[Do indoor pollutants and thermal conditions in schools influence student performance?](#) To assess whether school environments can adversely affect academic performance, we review scientific evidence relating indoor pollutants and thermal conditions, in schools or other indoor environments, to human performance or attendance. M. Mendell/G. Heath. Journal of Indoor Air. January 2005.

[Surgeon General Releases National Health Advisory On Radon](#) Dr. Carmona is especially focusing on how unhealthy indoor environment affects children, as he promotes 2005 as The Year of the Healthy Child. Millions of homes and apartments and one in five schools in America have indoor air quality problems. News Release. U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. 13 January 2005.

[2005: The Year of the Healthy Child](#) We as Americans spend between 85 and 95 percent of our time indoors. Secondhand smoke, lead, radon, and asbestos are threats to the indoor environment. One in five schools in America has indoor air quality problems. That is affecting millions of children who don't even realize it. United States Surgeon General. Official Remarks. 11 January 2005.

[Clearing the air in classrooms](#) More districts trying to combat pollution indoors. With some studies showing a link between indoor air pollution and learning and health problems among students, more schools are paying attention to air quality issues. The EPA is even trying to encourage more schools to monitor and prevent such pollution. Paris Achen. Houston Chronicle. 25 January 2005.

[Secondhand smoke can hurt kids' test scores](#) Even small amounts of secondhand smoke can sabotage a child's performance on reading, math, reasoning and logic tests, a new study finds. "We were looking for links between environmental tobacco smoke and performance on cognitive testing," said study author Steven Reinberg. HealthDayNews. Parentcenter.com. 4 January 2005.

[Living in a Fog: Secondhand smoke may dull kids' wits](#) Millions of U.S. children and adolescents could have deficits in reading and other skills caused by breathing secondhand smoke, researchers estimate. A new study links poor performance on several cognitive tests to tobacco-smoke exposure, even at low levels. Ben Harder. Science News. 15 January 2005.

[Passive smoke hits kids' marks](#) The more tobacco smoke a child is exposed to, the worse he/she does on tests, according to a report in the January issue of Environmental Health Perspectives. "We were looking for links between environmental tobacco smoke and performance on cognitive testing," [Financial Express](#), India. 17 January 2005.

[Cancer alert for smoking parents](#) Charities say the study is a 'terrifying spectre' for smokers. Children regularly exposed to smoking are three times more likely to contract lung cancer in later life than those in non-smoking homes, research suggests. [BBC](#). 28 January 2005.

## **(b) Outdoor air pollution**

[Most Childhood Cancers "Probably" Down to Prenatal Exposure to Pollutants](#) Most childhood cancers are "probably" down to prenatal exposure to industrial and environmental pollutants, most likely to have been inhaled by the mother during pregnancy, suggests [research](#) in the Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health. Journal Of Epidemiology And Community Health. [Newswise](#). 17 January 2005.

[Air Pollution Probable Cause of Most Childhood Cancers, Says Study](#) Exposure of pregnant women to air pollution is the most likely cause of childhood cancers, suggests a study. Children born within a 1 km of emissions hotspots of particular chemicals were between 2 and 4 times as likely to die of cancer before reaching the age of 16 as other children. Gina Borgsdof. [Daily News Central](#). 17 January 2005.

[Child cancers linked to pollutants](#) Most childhood cancers are probably caused by exposure in the womb to environmental and industrial pollutants that have been inhaled by the mother, a researcher has said. George Knox of the University of Birmingham, compared birth and death records of children who had died from cancer with a chemical emissions map of Britain. Patricia Reaney. [Reuters](#). 17 January 2005.

[Child cancer 'link to pollution'](#) Emission levels are going down. Exposure to environmental pollution while in the womb might increase a child's risk of cancer, a study suggests. Children born near emission "hotspots" were more likely to die of cancer before their 16th birthday than others. But cancer experts believe the research is heavily flawed and urge caution. [BBC](#). 17 January 2005.

[Pollution blamed for child cancers](#) Most childhood cancers are probably caused by exposure to pollutants while babies are still in the womb, a researcher claimed. He said the most dangerous pollutants were produced by industry or transport and these should be targeted in attempts to reduce childhood cancers. Lyndsay Moss. [Guardian](#), London. 17 January 2005.

[Pollution during pregnancy is linked to childhood cancer](#) Women who breathe air polluted with smoke and exhaust fumes are up to 4 times more likely to have children who develop cancer. Research suggests atmospheric pollution from oil-fired furnaces and vehicle exhausts may be the principal cause of childhood cancer. [Purchase required]. Jeremy Laurance. [Independent](#), London. 17 January 2005.

[Childhood Cancers linked to pollution - Study](#) Exposure of pregnant women to industrial emissions and air pollution could be the main culprit in most cases of childhood cancers. The highest risks are posed by the presence of 1,3-butadiene and carbon monoxide in the environment. Most of these gases are exhausted by vehicles on the roads. Joginder Cheema. Express Newline, India. 17 January 2005.

[Study links kids' cancers to moms' exposure to pollutants](#) Most childhood cancers are likely caused by pollutants expectant mothers are exposed to during pregnancy, according to a new study. Those at greatest risk live close to busy roads and industrial areas, researchers found. André Picard. Globe and Mail, Canada. 18 January 2005.

[Air pollution 'the cause of most cancers in children'](#) The majority of childhood cancers are probably caused by exposure to pollution before birth. Professor Knox, who has studied the birthplace of thousands of children who developed cancer, claims the inhaling of chemicals by pregnant mothers is the most likely trigger for the majority of such cases. Helen Puttick. Herald, Glasgow. 17 January 2005.

[Childhood cancers](#) Whether it turns out to be a eureka moment in the study of childhood cancers and their causes is too early to say. We are paying a price for the essentials of modern life. Is the price so high that we are poisoning our children (albeit a small, but growing minority) before they are even born? Editorial Comment. Herald, Glasgow. 17 January 2005.

[When every breath you take carries fear](#) Until then, local people were unaware of a link between the plant and possible effects on health. Their gradual understanding of the alleged connection mirrors the words of Professor George Knox. In a report he says the majority of childhood cancers are probably caused by exposure to pollution before birth. Shan Ross. Herald, Glasgow. 17 January 2005.

[Air pollution dangers on city streets](#) People are being poisoned by car fumes in Glasgow city centre. The findings come only days after Professor George Knox, of the University of Birmingham claimed childhood cancers are "probably" caused by exposure to pollutants while babies are still in the womb. Gordon Thomson. Evening Times, Scotland. 20 January 2005.

[Air pollution trims fetal growth](#) Pregnant women who breathe polluted air deliver babies that are slightly smaller than are those born to mothers in cleaner environments. Air pollution's apparent influence on birth weight is probably too small to cause harm in most cases, but may undermine health in infants at risk of problems. [Subscription required]. Ben Harder. Science News. 22 January 2005.

[Air pollution linked to lower birth weight](#) A new study has linked fine-particle air pollution — the kind produced by car exhaust and coal-fired power plants — to the births of smaller babies. The study found mothers exposed to high levels of the pollutant delivered babies weighing on average 30 grams — slightly more than an ounce — less. The State, South Carolina. 5 January 2005.

[Study links particulate pollution to low birth weight](#) Bolstering concerns about the health hazards of pollution, a study said babies born in California cities with the dirtiest air weigh less than those born in cleaner communities. The study, published in 'Pediatrics', joins a growing body of research about the dangers of fine particulate matter. Kerry Cavanaugh. New York Times Syndicate. 3 January 2005.

[Experts want air pollution on political agenda](#) Revealing the non-environmental effects of air pollution will help put the issue on the political agenda. Higher child IQ levels and hundreds of lives saved were returns once lead was removed from petrol. Doctors found that half of the children in Bangkok show symptoms of some form of respiratory illness. Ranjana Wangvipula. Bangkok Post. 26 January 2005.

[Diminishing The Danger From Diesel Exhaust](#) Diesel exhaust spews a toxic stew of more than 40 cancer-causing compounds into the air. New Yorkers suffer from some of the highest asthma rates in the country (up to 25% of school age children in some neighborhoods in Harlem are diagnosed), diesel pollution is a well-known asthma trigger. Andy Darrell. Gotham Gazette, New York. 10 January 2005.

[Schools closed for air pollution](#) Schools in the Iranian capital were closed and the elderly, the sick and children advised to stay indoors Sunday after air pollution reached alarming levels. AFP. Independent, Bangladesh. 2 January 2005.

[In Harm's Way](#) The region's refining and petrochemical industries are in some places contributing to what experts on toxic air pollution would consider a risky load of "air toxics," substances that can cause cancer, kidney and liver damage, or other serious health effects in places where people live and work, and where children play. [Registration required]. Dina Cappiello. Houston Chronicle. 16 January 2005.

[Stricter vehicle rules sought](#) Goal is to cut emissions, ease ozone, asthma woes. With 7 Eastern states adopting California's strict vehicle-pollution standards in recent years, some Maryland legislators are pushing to impose the same rules. "We have significant air pollution in Maryland and a dramatic increase in asthma, particularly among our children." Tom Pelton. Baltimore Sun. 17 January 2005.

[Cleaning up school bus emissions](#) A unique school bus retrofit project that uses a new technology and remote sensing verification aims to reduce children's exposure to harmful diesel exhaust soot. The program will install the novel pollution control devices, which are expected to cut diesel fine particulate matter (PM) emissions in half. Kris Christen. Environmental Science and Technology. 5 January 2005.

[Idle no more](#) With rising statistics in asthma and other respiratory ailments, its good to see the city making strides in cutting down the amount of unhealthy pollutants children going to and coming home from school are breathing. A fleet of school buses outfitted with a special filter was unveiled earlier this week. Editorial. Medford Transcript, Massachusetts. 13 January 2005.

[The Health Effects of Air Pollution: The Human Body Under Attack](#) Air pollution-toxins, particulate matter and ozone-is the invader that can break down the body's defenses. Ground-level ozone has been shown to contribute to hyper-responsiveness to allergens and mucus production that exacerbates asthma and may cause asthma in children. Vicki Wolf. ENN. 5 January 2005.

[Researchers Link Air Pollution, Heart Disease](#) "This is the first time we've found a strong cause, a strong relationship, between air pollution and heart disease." People with heart or lung disease, including asthma, will likely breathe more heavily on air pollution alert days. Even kids and adults who exercise outdoors will feel the effects. Dennis Doua. WCCO, Minneapolis. 31 January 2005.

### **(c) Asthma**

[Environmental Roots of Asthma](#) WHO estimates cases worldwide at 100-150 million. The emerging array of dynamic interactions between genes, allergens, and pollutants point to a complex profile of susceptibility. For children living along roadways with increased traffic density, asthma prevalence tends to be higher. M. Nathaniel Mead. Environmental Health Perspectives. January 2005.

[Asthma forums aim for understanding](#) Asthma is the leading cause of hospitalization in children and a frequent cause of school absenteeism. Nationally, asthma has risen about 300% in the past 10 years. No one's sure how much it is attributable to better diagnostic techniques, higher levels of exposure to environmental contaminants or both. Meg Haskell. Bangor Daily News, Maine. 10 January 2005.

[Asthma is on the rise but remains a mystery](#) So, as with many other diseases, the spotlight is not so much on the genes, but on their interaction with the environment — everything from air pollution to dust bunnies. Genetics may load the gun, so the saying goes, but environment pulls the trigger. Carol M. Ostrom. Seattle Times. 5 January 2005.

[U.S. Praises Program in City for Children With Asthma](#) A program to treat childhood asthma in central Harlem has been successful. Asthma rates there were more than five times the national average. Management of asthma through a combination of medicine and improved environmental conditions can significantly help. [Registration required]. Marc Santora. New York Times. 14 January 2005.

[Asthma Control Initiatives in Harlem Offer Children Breath of Fresh Air](#) Three hundred Harlem children living with asthma are breathing easier. Under a comprehensive public health effort, children with asthma and their parents were educated on how to control symptoms and eliminate factors that can induce asthma attacks.. David Greenhouse. Columbia Spectator, New York. 27 January 2005.

[State health agency plans five-year attack on asthma](#) Indianapolis -- State health and environmental officials hope to reduce chronic asthma among Hoosiers by attacking causes in

the outside air and inside Indiana homes, schools and businesses. Charles Wilson. Associated Press. 4 January 2005.

## **(2) CHEMICALS: (a) General**

Everyday chemicals 'cause infertility, cancer and birth defects' Top scientists appealed for new European regulations (REACH) on everyday chemicals, that they claim have tripled birth defects in the past 20 years. "Chemical pollution represents a serious threat to children and to man's survival". At present only new chemicals have to be assessed for their effects. Ann Cahill. Examiner, Ireland. 20 January 2005.

Toxic Breast Milk? When we nurse our babies, we feed them not only the fats, sugars and proteins, but also, albeit in minuscule amounts, paint thinners, dry-cleaning fluids, wood preservatives, toilet deodorizers, cosmetic additives, gasoline byproducts, rocket fuel, termite poisons, fungicides and flame retardants. [Purchase required] Florence Williams. New York Times. 9 January 2005.

Save the Fetus In a world awash in pollutants, what exactly is our obligation to protect the health of the unborn? Fetuses are the population we think are the most sensitive to chemical pollutants. Scientists believe that environmental factors play a role in at least three percent and as much as twenty-five percent of all developmental defects in children. Karen F. Schmidt. Science and Spirit. January 2005.

Cleaning products may affect babies' breathing Pregnant women who use a lot of household chemical products are more likely to have babies with persistent wheezing, new research reports. The products included bleach, disinfectant, air fresheners, aerosols, carpet cleaners and pesticides. Alison McCook. Reuters Health. 11 January 2005.

Are we poisoning our kids? Everyday household products can harm your family. A Safety Assessment of Ingredients in Personal Care Products. Norma Zuckerman's daughter used to wake up after nap time at school in pain. She was reacting to the cleaning materials and the dust in the rug when she laid on it for nap time. Jean Dunning. Environmental Working Group. 26 January 2005.

Uzbeks promise smelter clean-up Almalyk is one of Central Asia's dirtiest towns. A senior official at one of Central Asia's pollution hotspots has promised a clean-up will be completed by 2010. "There are many times when I won't leave my apartment because the air is so bad. It's not right that children have to live in these conditions". Alex Kirby. BBC. 3 January 2005.

Another Bhopal in Tamil Nadu Smells come from a toxic compound of chemicals being manufactured or released as effluents by the 20-something companies in the Sipcot region, devastating the health of the residents of the 20-something villages. Most below the age of 20, have respiratory problems, skin diseases and, in many cases, stunted growth. Amit Varma. Rediff, India. 12 January 2005.

[US plans protection from toxic aftermaths](#) The US plans to develop a protection system against toxicity arising out of disasters. "Environmental impact on children's health has also come to be studied extensively. Earlier, we thought of children as little adults - now we know that there are important differences in anatomy and in their response to the environment." Indo-Asian News Service. 4 January 2005.

[Doctors fear chemical link to child disease](#) A surge in cancer and neurological cases in north-eastern Tasmania since 2002 is consistent with chronic low-level chemical exposure, says a report to be submitted to the federal Australian Medical Association next month. [Registration required]. Claire Miller. The Age, Australia. 30 January 2005.

[Parents Blame Refinery For Children's Cancers](#) Some parents in the southwest suburbs say too many children there are diagnosed with cancer, and they are concerned an oil refinery is to blame. "According to my map, we have a significant higher level of leukemia, aplastic anemia and brain cancers in children and adults." Dana Kozlov. CBS2 Chicago. 11 January 2005.

[Trouble by ZIP code](#) Don't panic, but demand cleanup of toxic sites. The study says hospitalization rates for respiratory disease are as much as 2% in affected ZIP codes when compared with others statewide. In the last several years, Carpenter has written studies linking ZIP codes in New York with low-birthweight babies. Corydon Ireland. Democrat & Chronicle, New York. 10 January 2005.

[U.S. accuses DuPont of hiding data on exposure to Teflon](#) EPA asks panel of experts to assess risks to humans. More than 50 years after DuPont started producing Teflon, officials are accusing the company of hiding information suggesting that a chemical used to make the popular coating might cause cancer, birth defects and other ailments. Michael Hawthorne. Chicago Tribune. 18 January 2005.

[L'Oreal, Revlon bow to Bay Area pressure](#) Two major cosmetics companies have agreed to eliminate chemicals suspected of causing cancer, birth defects and infertility from their products, including a common plasticizer in nail polish. Chemicals suspected of causing cancer won't be in products. Jane Kay. San Francisco Chronicle. 15 January 2005.

[The Ugly Side of Beauty Products](#) Several reports highlights the presence of low-level concentrations of potential reproductive or developmental toxicants, particularly phthalates, in cosmetics and personal care products. A society needs to feel confident that adults will make better decisions, particularly when the health of a child may be at risk. Julia Barrett. Environmental Health Perspectives. January 2005.

[Soaps and cosmetics are dangerous for health!](#) A study reveals that non-toxic synthetic musks, widely used as fragrances in a variety of products, may pose a hidden threat to human health by enhancing the effect of compounds that are toxic. They are known to concentrate in fats, including breast milk, and endure in human tissue long after exposure. Health India. New Kerala, India. 5 January 2005.

[SM parent questions paint used in schools](#) "When you can smell the paint, it's a red flag of volatile organic compounds, like benzene, xylene and styrene, and that is toxic to our staff and our kids. VOCs are the No. 1 cause of cancer involving toxins." Elaine Bessier. [Johnson County Sun](#), Kansas. 20 January 2005.

## **(b) Lead**

[Dangerous lead is lurking in surprising places](#) Metal isn't just found in old paint. From old, peeling paint to kiddie jewelry, your children could be at risk of lead poisoning in the home. "Many, many agencies consider lead poisoning to be the leading environmental health risk to children." Darla Carter. [Courier-Journal](#), Kentucky. 20 January 2005.

[Lead Accumulation Tied to Mental Decline with Age](#) A lifetime of low-level exposure to lead may contribute to mental decline as people age, a study of older men suggests. Unborn babies and young children are especially vulnerable to the toxic effects of lead, as even low-level exposure can damage the developing brain and cause learning and behavioral problems. Amy Norton. [Reuters](#). 7 January 2005.

[Mike 2-faced on lead law](#) A Bloomberg plan aims to sharply reduce the danger to young children from lead-based paint. Lead poisoning remains a huge and persistent problem. In 2003, officials confirmed 3,490 new cases of children with elevated lead levels - a condition that can lead to brain damage, stunted development and behavioral problems. Juan Gonzalez. [Daily News](#), New York. 13 January 2005.

[Lead paint plan may be held up for a year](#) The city administration is pushing a new plan to reduce the danger of lead paint poisoning among children. Advocates have been clamoring for years for tougher lead-safe laws, especially since experts estimate that one in five children in the city suffers from lead poisoning. Rick Armon. [Rochester Democrat & Chronicle](#), New York. 17 January 2005.

[Group spreading the word about lead-poisoning danger](#) A group is on a quest to give households information about the hazards of lead poisoning among young children. Besides typically living in older homes that might have lead-based paint, Latino children are more at risk for poisoning due to exposure to folk remedies, candy and pottery containing lead. Jacqueline Shoyeb. [Arizona Republic](#). 19 January 2005.

[Getting the lead out](#) European rules force electronics companies to clean up. Some California lawmakers are closely watching the EU, requesting a report on chemical policy options from UC Berkeley. It was inspired in part by REACH and in part by problems, such as the identification of hundreds of synthetic chemicals in breast milk. Birgitta Forsberg. [San Francisco Chronicle](#). 20 January 2005.

[60 families approved for buyout help](#) 88 young children in former mining field affected by plan. The state is moving small children from the Tar Creek Superfund Site because of the threat of chronic lead poisoning. A child's developing nervous system can be permanently damaged by

exposure to low levels of lead, according to federal health officials. Wally Kennedy. Joplin Globe, Missouri. 14 January 2005.

### **(c) Pesticides**

DDT Detected in Breast Milk "The levels of DDT in breast milk in the Kariba area is very high and very worrying although we don't know yet the effects on suckling babies. Studies still have to be done to ascertain the implications," said Nhachi, who has carried out studies on the effect of pesticides on humans, animals and the environment. Caiphas Chimhete. Zimbabwe Standard. 9 January 2005

Pesticides may cause prostate cancer, say government advisers Friends of the Earth also pointed out that while workers wore protective gear for spraying, many who lived near fields being treated, including children, did not. There was far too little information on this risk too, it said. James Meikle. Guardian, London. 10 January 2005.

EPA Takes Pest Killer Diazinon Off the Shelves Consumers can no longer buy one of the most popular lawn and garden insecticides of all time. EPA phased out residential use of the chemical, which can damage the nervous system, after determining that it poses a human health risk, particularly to children. Marla Cone. Los Angeles Times. 1 January 2005.

It's Time to Spray DDT f the U.S. wants to help people in tsunami-hit countries like Sri Lanka and Indonesia - not to mention other poor countries in Africa - there's one step that would cost us nothing and would save hundreds of thousands of lives. It would be to allow DDT in malaria-ravaged countries. [Purchase required] Nicholas D. Kristof. New York Times. 8 January 2005.

Urgent Call To Action Over Mosquito District Pesticides Pyrethrin and Pyrethroid pesticide exposure can lead to a variety of health problems including headaches, nausea, convulsions and respiratory failure. Infants are at particular risk because their bodies cannot effectively break down the chemicals. (Source: Physicians for Social Responsibility.) Katharina Sandizell. Coastal Post, California. January 2005.

Agency Is Sued Over Pesticides Mandate Environmentalists say enforcement of the law has become pressing as housing and schools push closer to farmland. More than 90% pf pesticides are prone to drifting from where they were applied, becoming airborne toxins. A law allows officials to restrict pesticide applications within a quarter-mile of schools. Fred Alvarez. Los Angeles Times. 20 January 2005.

Are There Any Organic Products That Young Children Would Enjoy? Infants and children are especially vulnerable to the harmful effects of pesticides, which can include cancer and nerve damage. Typically, the younger a child is, the greater the degree of susceptibility. Each exposure to a toxic chemical adds to a kid's body burden. Editors. E/The Environmental Magazine. 31 January 2005.

### **(d) Mercury**

[Questions & Answers on the Mercury Strategy](#) Methylmercury passes both the placental barrier and the blood-brain barrier, and so can inhibit children's potential mental development even before birth. The proposed [EU strategy on mercury](#) will include further investigation of dietary exposure for women of child-bearing age and children. Press Release. [European Union](#). 31 January 2005.

[Scientists worry that mercury dangers mimic deadly lead](#) Last summer, Pugliese, 28, who had been trying to get pregnant, had her hair tested for mercury, a toxic pollutant that interferes with brain development in the fetus. The results showed the mercury level in her body was 50 percent over the EPA's safety level. Joan Lowy. [Scripps Howard News Service](#). 26 January 2005.

[Report: Mercury can be cut 90%](#) Environmentalists say state can follow strict standards at a low cost. Mercury, a metal that becomes toxic when released to the air, water and soil and can damage the brains of developing fetuses. Indiana ranks 2<sup>nd</sup> in the number of warnings against eating fish caught in state waterways because of mercury contamination. Tammy Webber. [Indystar.com](#), Indiana. 20 January 2005.

[High Levels of Toxin Seen at 9 Chlorine Plants](#) A report has found that 9 chlorine factories are among the largest sources of mercury, a potent neurotoxin that spreads globally and has rendered some seafood unsafe. 1 in 6 babies in the U.S., more than 600,000 per year, is born to a mother with a mercury level exceeding that deemed safe for a fetus. Marla Cone. [Los Angeles Times](#). 26 January 2005.

#### **(e) Fire retardants**

[PBDEs in dust and dryer lint](#) Research provides the strongest hypothesis to date for the source of the very high levels of brominated flame retardants being found in the blood and breast milk of U.S. residents. The study shows that children in the most contaminated homes may be ingesting enough PBDEs from dust to raise concern. Kellyn Betts. [Environmental Science and Technology](#). 12 January 2005.

[Flame Retardants In Dust](#) Dust and dryer lint may be significant PBDE sources. The researchers caution that small children may be particularly susceptible to household dust inhalation because of their propensity to mouth hands and toys. Louisa W. Dalton. [Chemical & Engineering News](#). 5 January 2005.

[State urges ban on group of fire-retardants](#) A family of fire-retardant chemicals should be banned amid growing concerns that it is toxic, particularly to fetuses and infants. PBDEs have been found in food, women's breast milk and dust. There are concerns that it interferes with neurological development in fetuses and children and impairs the thyroid gland. Warren Cornwall. [Seattle Times](#). 6 January 2005.

#### **(f) Rocket Fuel**

[Study links sickness to Russian launch site](#) Rocket launches in Kazakhstan are causing illness among people who live near the take-off site, according to an unpublished study. The study

focuses on children in the Altai Republic. Children from the worst affected area were up to twice as likely to require medical attention during the 3 years studied. [Subscription required]. Jim Giles. Nature. 12 January 2005.

[Report blames Russian rockets for illness](#) Toxic chemicals spewed from Russian rocket launches in Kazakhstan are responsible for higher illness levels among children living in polluted villages nearby, according to a report published in a British science journal. Associated Press. CNN. 13 January 2005.

[Illness linked to rocket station](#) The rocket fuel, hydrazine, released after take-off, is "nasty and toxic". Children living near the world's oldest space launch station suffer from high rates of hormonal problems and blood disorders, a journal says. The rates of disease close to Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan have more than doubled in some cases, Nature reported. BBC. 13 January 2005.

[Russian Rocket Site Linked to Child Sickness](#) Unburned fuel from rockets launched at the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan is causing serious illnesses in children who live near the site, a leading science journal said. "The first detailed epidemiological study of people living under the flight path suggests that the rocket fuel is indeed causing health problems." Patricia Reaney. Reuters. 12 January 2005.

[Perchlorate report doesn't dispel controversy](#) Perchlorate is not as hazardous as EPA scientists estimated, but it is more harmful than many manufacturers have suggested. Because thyroid hormones play a major role in brain development, EPA and NAS focused on making sure that fetuses and infants would be protected. Rebecca Renner. Environmental Science and Technology. 19 January 2005.

[Perchlorate: Out of the Hot Water?](#) The National Academy of Science's safe-dosage recommendation is a surprise to the EPA -- and may save businesses millions. sufficient consumption of perchlorate can block iodine uptake to the thyroid gland, an essential function in the development of newborns and fetuses. Burt Helm. Business Week. 14 January 2005.

[Health Standard for Perchlorate in Drinking Water Too High, Panel Says](#) A panel of scientists concluded that perchlorate, a toxic chemical used in rocket fuel and explosives, is safe for consumption at levels 20 times greater than the standard being considered by EPA. The chemical can inhibit thyroid function and is considered particularly dangerous to children. Erica Werner. Associated Press. 11 January 2005.

[Water safety findings clash](#) A scientific panel's acceptable level of rocket fuel is 20 times what the EPA urges. In the case of perchlorate, scientists say fetuses and infants are at much higher risk than adults because they consume far more water per pound and because perchlorate at certain levels can impair their brain development. Chris Bowman. Sacramento Bee, California. 11 January 2005.

[Academy review says suggested limit on pollutant is too strict](#) Perchlorate dispute pits EPA vs. Pentagon. Perchlorate is a salt that affects the thyroid gland's hormone production. Some studies

have found that even relatively small doses can affect the mental development of young children, especially if their mothers consume it during pregnancy. Peter Eisler. USA Today. 10 January 2005.

[Science Panel Issues Report on Exposure to Pollutant](#) The report said that the evidence the panel examined "is inadequate to determine whether or not there is a causal association between perchlorate exposure and adverse neurodevelopmental outcomes in children." [Purchase required]. Felicity Barringer. New York Times. 11 January 2005.

[Safety rating for perchlorate](#) Scientists concluded that perchlorate, a chemical left over from weapons manufacturing, is safe at levels about 20 times higher than would be allowed under draft federal environmental regulations. It has generated widespread concern because it can interfere with thyroid-gland function, posing a particular risk to children. Stephen Smith. Boston Globe. 11 January 2005.

[Perchlorate in water less of a threat, panel claims](#) Rocket fuel trace level study draws dissent. Drinking water tainted by an ingredient in rocket fuel and explosives is less dangerous than previously thought, and might not cause brain damage in babies or thyroid illnesses at trace levels, according to a report yesterday by the National Academy of Sciences. Tom Pelton. Baltimore Sun. 11 January 2005.

[Scientists dispute peril of a pollutant](#) Dangerous levels of perchlorate hinder the functioning of the thyroid, causing developmental problems in children and tumors in adults, scientists believe. It was discovered to be a widespread drinking-water contaminant in the late 1990s, and there is not yet a federal standard. Alexander Lane. Star-Ledger, New Jersey. 11 January 2005.

[Dangers of Rocket Fuel Chemical Downplayed](#) Conclusions were praised by defense contractors facing potentially billions of dollars in cleanup costs but denounced by environmentalists. Perchlorate can interfere with the thyroid gland, which in children, plays a major role in development, raising fears that exposure could cause brain damage. Rob Stein. Washington Post. 11 January 2005.

[Rocket chemical deemed no threat in water](#) Most areas are spared cleanup. Perchlorate, a compound that keeps iodide from being absorbed by the body, has been found to damage fetuses and infants and could lessen brain development and lead to attention deficit disorder. The FDA has found it in grocery stores' milk, according to a study last year. Seth Borenstein. Knight Ridder. 11 January 2005.

[Study Disagrees With EPA on Perchlorate](#) Scientists' report says it poses a health risk but not at doses as low as the agency had calculated. The panel concluded that perchlorate posed a health threat because it can interfere with the human thyroid gland, which controls how the brain develops in infancy. Marla Cone/Lisa Getter. Los Angeles Times. 11 January 2005.

[U.S. Tried to Suppress Pollutant Study, Group Says](#) The Natural Resources Defense Council challenged the report even before it was issued, saying the authors had been influenced by the Pentagon and defense contractors and it had evidence to prove it. There are no federal limits on

how much is safe but groups have said the chemical could affect developing babies. Maggie Fox. Reuters. 10 January 2005.

[Safe Drinking Water Now](#) Perchlorate and Children's Health: The Case for a Strong Cleanup Standard for Rocket Fuel in Drinking Water. In order to protect expecting mothers, their developing fetuses and their infant children, the California Department of Health Services should set a final health standard for perchlorate in drinking water at one part per billion or less. Environment California. January 2005.

### **(3) WATER AND SANITATION**

[UN Launches Major Campaign to Get Water Into Schools](#) The UN will launch a global campaign on Monday aimed at ensuring every school in the world has clean water and sanitation within a decade, cutting health risks and raising attendance. Access to safe water and sanitation is one of the key Millennium Development Goals to be met by 2015. Jeremy Lovell. Reuters. 24 January 2005.

[The tragedy and value of water](#) Even if a tsunami-related disease outbreak is entirely averted, in 3 weeks, more than 125,000 people globally will have died from waterborne disease most of them children. In a month, the immediate loss of life associated with the tsunami will likely be surpassed by those dying from drinking unsafe water. [Registration required]. Jack Hoffbuhr. Houston Chronicle. 8 January 2005.

[Clinton announces cash for UNICEF tsunami relief](#) Former US President Bill Clinton has written the first cheque to launch a new fund with UNICEF to bring life saving water and sanitation to survivors of the tsunami. The partnership will strengthen UNICEF's work in protecting children from water borne diseases in areas still devastated by the catastrophe. Press Release. UNICEF. 10 January 2005.

[Like magic: A purifying powder can turn muddy water clear, and safe.](#) PUR, contains chlorine but also gets rid of toxic heavy metals, such as arsenic and mercury, and makes muddy water look clean. Worldwide, the number-one goal for PUR is to prevent diarrhea, which is believed to kill 5,000 children every day. [Registration Required]. Tom Avril. Philadelphia Inquirer. 5 January 2005.

[Of water and diseases](#) Some health experts consider dirty water as the world's deadliest pollutant. 250 million cases of water-borne disease are reported each year. 10 million people-the majority of them children-die each year. The water crisis is life threatening. "The suffering and misery represented by these statistics is almost beyond comprehension". Henrylito Tacio. Sun-Star, Philippines. 20 January 2005.

[Poor Remain Thirsty in Water-Rich Nation](#) In the Zambian village of Gwembe a visit to the village chief's palace kicks off the children's day. They need to draw drinking water and the palace, some two km away from the school, is the only place where it's available. They also need to stop by in the bushes - they are far better than the pit latrines near their homes. Zarina Geloo. AllAfrica.com. 6 January 2005.

[Uzbekistan: Drainage water polluting the Amudarya](#) The return of drainage water back to the Amudarya River is a major source of water contamination in northwestern Uzbekistan, leading to health implications for the local population. "What I noticed in the recent years is that our children's health and immune system have become very weak and they easily become ill". IRIN. [Reuters](#). 12 January 2005.

#### **(4) ASIAN TSUNAMI/QUAKE**

[The most vulnerable victims](#) Children are more vulnerable-smaller, weaker and more susceptible to nature's fury and disease. Cramped refugee camps, lack of food or clean water and poor sanitation foster prime conditions for measles, cholera and diarrhea outbreaks. [Registration required]. Greg Botelho/Matthew Chance/Anderson Cooper/Stam Grant/Jeanne Meserve/Hugh Riminton. [CNN](#). 10 January 2005

[World rushes relief to South Asian tsunami survivors](#) WHO says millions are now under serious threat of disease. UNICEF is seeking \$81 million to support urgent humanitarian aid for an estimated 1.5 million children. UNEP says it is also important to address underlying risks, such as solid and liquid waste, industrial chemicals, sewage treatment and the salinization of drinking water. [ENS](#). 4 January 2005.

[UN urges aid for tsunami orphans](#) Families still intact are often without homes and basic facilities. UNICEF has urged special attention for child victims of the Indian Ocean disaster, saying thousands need protection. UNICEF has estimated that about one third of those killed across the region were children. [BBC](#). 2 January 2005.

[500,000 people injured by Asian tsunami](#) The region faces a "health disaster" if access to clean drinking water is not resumed soon, WHO says. The young and very old will be most at risk from the effects of waterborne diseases because they are least able to tolerate the dehydration which comes with diseases. Shaoni Bhattacharya. [New Scientist](#). 4 January 2005.

[Disease Still a Threat in Tsunami-Stricken Aceh --UN](#) Aid agencies have prevented disease spreading through tsunami-stricken Aceh, but the threat remained strong, the UN said as doctors reported children dying from pneumonia. "As long as people live in groups where they haven't yet got good sanitation that will have to be given very top-level attention." Jerry Norton. [Reuters](#). 14 January 2005.

[Tsunami's 'second wave of death' - disease - can now be largely avoided, UN says](#) The top UN emergency official said he believed the relief effort could now avoid the feared "second wave of death" from the tsunami - the toll taken by epidemic diseases. So far the tsunami has claimed 160,000 lives, half of them children according to revised figures of the toll. News Release. [United Nations](#). 13 January 2005.

[A new disaster in the works for tsunami victims](#) Many of the areas devastated by the tsunami that killed at least 160,000 people are among those scientists say are the most endangered by global warming. The World Bank warns about major rises in diseases that already kill millions of

children in the developing world such as malaria, diarrhea, dengue fever. Derrick Jackson. Boston Globe. 12 January 2005.

[Somalia: Fears Of Water-Borne Diseases In Areas Affected By Tsunami](#) The Indian Ocean tsunami that slammed onto the Somali coast 10 days ago destroyed water sources and sanitation facilities on Hafun peninsula, putting up to 1,000 households at risk of water-borne diseases, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) said. IRINNews.org. 5 January 2005.

## **(5) MISCELLANEOUS**

[Federal project to be largest U.S. survey of children's health](#) Do viral infections in babies contribute to asthma in children later? Does pesticide exposure harm a child's ability to learn? Why is autism on the rise? These are the types of questions the federal government hopes to answer with the National Children's Study. [Registration required]. Twin Cities.com, Minneapolis-St. Paul. 7 January 2005.

[Ambulatory Pediatric Association Releases Code of Ethics](#) To Ensure Integrity for Research that Involves Children. To help manage and eliminate conflicts of interest and to improve public trust in research that involves children, the Ambulatory Pediatric Association (APA) developed a code of ethics for research that involves children. Ruth A. Etzel. Ambulatory Pediatrics. January 2005.

[Viruses, X-Rays Join List of Cancer Agents](#) "New listings include lead and lead compounds, X-rays, compounds found in grilled meats, and a host of substances used in textile dyes, paints and inks," the NIEHS said. Children exposed to high levels of X-rays have a higher risk of leukemia and thyroid cancer. Reuters. 31 January 2005.

[Allergies may be decided in the womb](#) Pregnant women who smoke, inhale pollen, dust mites or pet hair particles might be putting their children at greater risk of getting allergies or asthma. In fact, exposure to allergens in the womb might be a more significant factor than exposure after birth in deciding whether youngsters develop the conditions later in childhood. Star, South Africa. 18 January 2005.

[When Nations' Decisions Cause or Intensify Environmental Damage In Ways that Hurt Humans, Is There An International Legal Remedy?](#) From Global Warming in the North, to Tsunamis in South Asia. Evidence shows that the Inuit's health is suffering as a result of U.S. pollution: one study showed an extremely high level of toxins in the Inuit's breast milk. Noah S. Leavitt. Find Law. 3 January 2005.

[Karachi: Nazim highlights steps to contain pollution](#) City Nazim Niamatullah Khan has said that every possible step would be taken to control environmental pollution which is proving harmful to people, especially the young generation, and causing an increase in various diseases. APP. Dawn, Pakistan. 15 January 2005.

[It's a dirty job but someone's got to do it](#) It blights all our lives. But when will pollution be taken seriously? This filth is the cloud of poisonous smoke from piles of tyres being illegally burned; the pollution of water supplies by rotting nappies, batteries and other household waste; the toxic

waste left in leaking canisters in a park where children play. Jackie Ashley. Guardian, London. 13 January 2005.

[Europe finds you can be too careful](#) Emphasis on precautions fuels panic without proof. They are measuring safety by the "precautionary principle," a ubiquitous but controversial feature of European law. Europeans ruled out one kind of plastic in children's toys, causing manufacturers to use alternate substances whose risks also are unknown. Rebecca Goldsmith. Newark Star-Ledger. 23 January 2005.

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