

Prenatal Health, The Smallest Choices With The Greatest Effects

No one would argue that our children are among our most precious resources. Ensuring the happiness and well-being of future generations is the goal of every parent. While some may be better at the job than others, the common thread between them is a strong desire to do what is best for them and provide them with the best things in life that they have to offer.

At times, though, there seems to be a force greater than even the best intentions of parents. The incidences of developmental abnormalities, birth defects, childhood illness and pre-adolescent cancers are increasing. In order to solve problems of a medical nature, the first question one must answer is what caused the problem in the first place?

There are a number of researchers who have been tackling this problem for decades, and while research is continuing, enough information has surfaced that indicates that major changes are needed and parents, especially mothers, need to be educated on the risks and dangers that exist in the modern world and take immediate and effective steps to prevent and avoid them.

One such research institution is the Columbia Center for Children's Environmental Health in New York City. They have a continuing study that has been in place for over 13 years. Their studies have been focusing on establishing environmental factors that affect fetal and childhood development. One such study followed pregnant women

for 48 hours at a time while they wore special backpacks with hoses whose ends were mounted near the mouths of the women in order to collect air samples and record air quality information on a continuous basis. When they analyzed the information from the backpacks, what they found was incredible. In *every single backpack* they found traces of chemicals from car exhaust, as well as common household chemicals. That, in itself, may not be surprising, but how about the fact that they also found at least one *pesticide*. That's right, pesticides. In the air. In New York City. Not some rural agricultural community, but in the middle of one of the most urbanized environments on the planet, airborne pesticides.

While the effect these toxins may have on the pregnant mother's health is of definite concern, the larger question is: what effect do these toxins have on the fetus? Do these toxins even reach the fetus? The answer, unfortunately, is very disheartening. According to research studies conducted by the Environmental Working Group, a pregnant mother's body will use the growing baby as a literal dumping ground for toxins. An EWG study that analyzed blood samples from the umbilical cords of 10 babies born in late 2009 and found, on average, 232 different chemicals inside. What is even more distressing is that these chemicals are not rare, obscure, or difficult to trace. They come from common household items like soaps, electronics, plastics, cosmetics, hair care items, etc., not to mention pesticides as well.

Before any attempt is made to dismiss the seriousness of this information consider that the Columbia Center has continued to follow the children in the studies into their first few years of life and have found a direct correlation between the concentration of chemicals in their blood and decreased IQ scores. Parallel studies are also being conducted in Europe and Asia with similar results being reported.

With this amount of overwhelming evidence that the quantity of chemical exposure is having a significant health and performance impact on our children, what are the government authorities doing to help resolve the situation? Sadly, not as much as they could, or should. In fact, as far as pesticides are concerned, a new pesticide does not have to undergo testing to prove whether or not it is a carcinogen. It is the other way around. Only once it has made people sick and been proven to be a carcinogen or an acute toxin does it then become considered for a ban from the market.

Even when testing *is* conducted on various new chemicals that are may have potential toxic effects on humans, the method of testing is often of poor quality. Usually, an animal study is done where a single toxin is fed to an animal at various doses until an acute reaction is observed. They note this level, divide it by an arbitrary amount of label the fraction as the “maximum tolerable level” for safe human consumption. Anyone can see the flaws in this assessment method. Firstly, the difference between humans and

various animals can be close in some instances and far in others. This only observes acute reactions, not the effects of prolonged low dose exposure over decades. Also, people don't just consume a single toxin, they are exposed to and usually unintentionally consume multiple toxins simultaneously and the effects of chemical combinations of these toxins is not yet fully understood and the risk exists that such a combination may result in a super toxin (think ammonia and bleach). Last, but not least, this study in no way assesses what impacts this toxin may have on a developing fetus, or even a toddler.

While one may think that the desire to do the right thing by someone would be enough incentive to improve this system, but sadly this is not the case. The incentives of large corporations are to simply manage the risks and improve supply of goods and produce profits. Not that profits are altogether a bad thing, but at the price of human life monetary gains should be secondary. Most likely, the consideration is that by the time the afflicted people develop cancer or some major illness, the causes will be obscure and varied and they will have made enough money and lived their lives and will most likely not be held accountable for their poor choices that have caused sorrow and hardship to the masses and the children who are our future.

Children's immune systems and livers have not fully matured and their susceptibility to harmful toxins is much greater than an adults and more significant long-term damage

can occur from even small doses of toxins. A developing fetus is even more at risk because the cells are rapidly proliferating and no resistances are yet in place to protect the fetus because this is the biological purpose of the mother.

While there are some who argue that no *conclusive* link has been made between prenatal toxicity and childhood development disorders, and that the exact mechanisms by which these toxins can damage a fetus are not entirely explained, common sense dictates that these substances are best to be avoided entirely for the sake of the child.

This is obviously easier said than done. If even the air we breathe has been contaminated, how can we prevent toxic accumulation and exposure? The hard truth is that unless you spent the last year prior to pregnancy doing the ultimate detox program and then spent your entire pregnancy inside a hermetically sealed chamber with perfectly filtered air and lived off of homegrown food for nine months, chances are that there is going to be some degree of chemical exposure. If you recall the findings of the Columbia Center, however, the greater the concentration of chemicals, the greater the IQ loss. Thus the converse is true, the less toxins reach the fetus, the less damage will occur.

To make this a reality, the best strategy is to first detox your body prior to pregnancy, but since many pregnancies are unplanned, this may not always occur, but for those of you who may one day want children, it is

never too early to begin making healthy choices that will improve your child's quality of life. During the pregnancy, there are a number of methods to help your body's natural defenses deal with the barrage of toxins that it absorbs to minimize those toxins that could reach the fetus.

Some examples are using cilantro and chlorella to absorb and excrete heavy metals. Anti-oxidants like glutathione, B12 and folic acid, and others assist your liver and provide means for it and other organs to process toxins and excrete them from the body and not into the fetus.

Also beneficial are sulfur-based amino acids such as N-Acetyl Cysteine because of important role they play in improving the detoxification pathways of the body.

There is also research that suggest that hops can be very effective at assisting the body in detoxifying heavy metals and other toxins.

While these and other nutrients can greatly assist your body in preventing toxic accumulation, the ultimate prevention tool is adjusting your lifestyle. Read labels, identify potential sources of toxicity and eliminate them from your environment. Don't consume fish or shellfish (Mercury), avoid food that comes in plastic containers and metal cans. Don't cook with aluminum or tin foil. Avoid taking long drives in heavy traffic. Eat organic food. Use only natural cosmetics and hair products that do not contain harmful chemicals. Ask tough questions of product

manufacturers and demand straight answers about potential toxins in their products. Avoid drinking tap water and stick to quality bottled water. Do research and learn about the different sources of toxic exposure and empower yourself through knowledge.

While it may not seem like much, even small changes can have big effects. An excellent example is the Agouti mouse. There was an experiment conducted on pregnant mice, specifically the Agouti mice, which are so-named for a gene they carry that causes them to be obese, yellow-furred mice that give birth to identical-looking offspring and they typically die from one of two causes: cancer or diabetes. The researchers wanted to see if diet alone could have an impact on the fetal development of the pregnant mice.

They separated the pregnant Agouti mice into two groups, one group got normal mouse food, while the other was given a simple diet of healthy foods that contain detoxifying nutrients. They maintained these diets throughout the entire course of the pregnancies. When the baby mice were born the effects were obvious.

The normal food mice had given birth to identical looking yellow fat mice. The healthy mice had brown-furred skinny mice that lived on average 15% longer than normal Agouti mice and never developed either cancer or diabetes.

This may sound like some “perfect world” idealism, but it’s not. The pregnant mothers breathed the same

air, performed the same activities, had the same genetics, everything. The only difference was the diet. Diet alone changed everything for their offspring. Even though the baby mice had the same genetics, the actions their mother’s took made all the difference in the world and the only choice that mattered was diet.

It is very easy to just succumb and give up on trying to lead a clean life. When you really take the time to observe the mess that has been created on this planet it can seem impossible to avoid and the only way to prevent fear and stress is to just give in and ignore it. Considering the type of person that makes it this far in a newsletter, you aren’t that kind of person. You are someone who isn’t afraid to learn and make important changes. You may not turn into a full-time flag-waving activist, but you will know enough to improve your own life, and perhaps even change the life of a child.



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