

Hands off my ovaries, chemical industry

Aug 9, 2012 by Kathryn Gilje



When it comes to ovaries, I get protective. Infertility, endometriosis, and fibroids aren't words I should have to use as frequently as I do. And I'm not the only one noticing this disturbing trend. Women around me agree that something is definitely wrong.

Science is increasingly pointing to chemicals in our lives that act as [endocrine disruptors](#), causing problems associated with [reproductive health](#). According to an article in [Environmental Health News](#) last week, "Several new studies are adding to the evidence that some estrogen-mimicking pesticides and industrial chemicals may increase women's risk of uterine and ovarian diseases — helping to solidify a theory that emerged two decades ago."

Endocrine disrupting chemicals, including a large portion of pesticides (like [atrazine](#)), mimic hormones and [can trigger a train wreck for health](#) even in extremely low doses. The [news this past week](#) highlighted the story of Patricia Lee:

"Patricia Lee started experiencing severe irregularities in her menstrual cycle. She had one period that lasted two and a half months. The bleeding was so intense that at one point, doctors recommended a blood transfusion.

'I couldn't sleep — it was excruciatingly painful and I grew quite weak,' said Lee, now 47. Her diagnosis: a fibroid, or benign tumor, the size of a ping-pong ball in her uterus, and two cysts in her ovaries."

Science shows the link

Researchers have long suspected a link between endocrine disruptors and reproductive health problems. In [EHN](#), Germaine Buck-Louis— director of the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development's epidemiology division in Maryland — affirmed that new science is beginning to corroborate those findings:

- One [study](#), involving women living in Salt Lake City and San Francisco found that those exposed to a specific [persistent](#) pesticide ([HCH](#), which you may know as [lindane](#)) were more likely to develop endometriosis.

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Published on Pesticide Action Network (<http://www.panna.org>)

- In Italy, another [study](#) found that women had endometriosis more frequently if their body had residues of two chemicals: a break-down product of [DDT](#) or polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs).

An unchecked chemical industry

The [laws regulating chemicals](#) on the market just don't take [endocrine disruptors](#) into account. With too many women around me already bearing the grief of an unchecked chemical industry, it falls to me to protect my eggs, uterus and reproductive health.

It's largely up to us to [take the required collective action](#) to protect our bodies, holding policymakers to account and ensuring they safeguard healthy, sound development for the next generation — if not ours.

[Take action»](#) Tell policymakers to follow the science on cancer and the endocrine disrupting pesticide atrazine. Found in drinking water across the country (and especially the Midwest, where I'm from) we're clearly overexposed to atrazine harms. It's time to make sure the chemical industry plays by rules that protect our health.

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