



Oregon
Environmental
Council
It's Your Oregon



To promote the potential of every Oregon child, the Oregon Environmental Council supports public policies and runs programs that protect infants and children from health problems triggered by pollution.

Children's Environmental Health Program

Kids Deserve Safe, Healthy Environments

Rates of environmentally related diseases among children are on the rise. Increasingly, studies demonstrate that exposure to toxic chemicals during infancy or childhood can affect the development of the respiratory, nervous, hormone and immune systems, as well as increasing the risk of cancer later in life.

- The National Academy of Sciences estimates that chemical exposures play a role in at least one in four cases of developmental disorders.
- Learning disabilities increased 191% between 1977 and 1994.
- Asthma-related illness is a leading cause for school absenteeism in the United States.
- Childhood cancer has jumped from the realm of a medical rarity to the most common disease killer of American schoolchildren.
- Research has shown that children who are exposed to pesticides before age one are four times more likely to develop early persistent asthma.

In addition to the huge emotional and human costs these diseases incur, the financial costs to society are too great to ignore. According to OEC's *Price of Pollution* study, annual costs of environmentally attributable diseases in Oregon children total over \$1.1 billion. The Centers for Disease Control reports that children with asthma incur 88% higher health care costs per year on average than asthma-free children.

Children are more vulnerable to toxic pollution than adults for a number of reasons. Children breathe more rapidly than adults, eat more food and drink more water per pound of body weight, and have organs and immune systems that are immature and developing. Because children spend more time closer to the ground and often put their hands to their mouths, they more easily transfer pollution into their bodies. By reducing toxic pollution to levels that are safer for children, we also help protect the health of all Oregonians.

Our Vision

Oregon children will live and play in toxic-free environments. Businesses and governments will reduce the use of and prevent the release of chemicals that harm human health. Parents and caregivers will protect our children from toxic chemicals, even before birth, as vigilantly as we now protect them from tobacco smoke or alcohol. As a result, we will see declines in asthma, learning disabilities, cancer and other health problems triggered by pollution, especially in young children.

Our Strategies

OEC fosters healthy, safe environments for infants, toddlers and school-age children by promoting toxic-free products, homes, daycares and schools. We help parents and caregivers secure and act on the information they need to reduce children's exposure to toxic chemicals. We partner with health professionals and other concerned Oregonians to create, support and implement comprehensive chemical policy that protects kids' health. Two of OEC's children's health programs won the US EPA's Children's Environmental Health Excellence Award in 2006.

Tools for Caregivers

OEC offers a Healthy Kids Network for concerned Oregonians, engaging families in positive lifestyle choices to reduce children's exposure to potentially harmful chemicals. The Network provides tools to empower individuals in their roles as consumers, caregivers and household managers. Tools include a Tiny Footprints Baby Shower Kit, Eco-Healthy Lunch Box, Eco-Healthy Home Tips delivered by email and an Eco-Healthy Home "Checklist Challenge". The Network provides opportunities to learn about and weigh in on policies that protect all children.

Eco-Healthy Child Care

OEC's award-winning Eco-Healthy Child Care program delivers technical assistance and training to child care providers on reducing children's exposure to toxic substances. By creating healthier environments in and around child care facilities, the program creates healthier kids. We have qualified more than 1,100 child cares nationwide, including more than 300 in Oregon.

Eco-Healthy Schools

OEC's Eco-Healthy Schools program improves environmental health in and around schools while also reducing the impact of schools on the environment. We support school efforts to reduce car idling on campus, establish integrated pest management practices, replace dirty diesel school buses, purchase green cleaning products, and adopt green building practices. In 2009, we passed two bills that reduce unnecessary exposures to diesel bus pollutants and pesticides commonly used in schools.

Reforming Chemical Policy

In 2007 OEC released *Pollution in People*, the results of "body burden" tests conducted on 10 Oregonians measuring the presence of six types of toxic chemicals in their bodies. Our 2008 *Price of Pollution* report provides analysis detailing the cost of environmentally related disease in Oregon. These reports have increased public awareness of environmental toxicants in Oregon and demonstrate the need for chemical policy reform. We are forwarding legislation in 2010 requiring Oregon to compile a list of high-hazard chemicals present in children's products and authorizing the state to regulate these chemicals. In addition, we will be seeking restrictions on the sale of bisphenol A and phthalate-containing children's products.

Engaging Health Professionals

OEC administers the *Oregon Chapter of the Collaborative for Health and the Environment* (Oregon CHE). This collaboration builds bridges between environmental health professionals and educates the public on environmental health threats and solutions. OEC helps organize the annual *Northwest Environmental Health Conference* and offers lectures designed to educate health professionals on environmental health issues, trends, and solutions. Our *Healthy Environment, Healthy Tomorrow* e-newsletter continues the conversation with health professionals by providing cutting edge environmental health information quarterly.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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