

WBCC statement on correlations between chemicals and breast cancer development

We believe that policy reflects a community's priorities and that reducing exposure to chemical toxins should be a priority for all communities.

WHY?

- Only a small percentage of breast cancer can be attributed to genetic or family history.
- It is believed that approximately 75% of breast cancer cases may be caused by modifiable factors – including exposure to chemicals in our environment.
- Earlier puberty and later menopause increase risk for breast cancer.
- Girls are reaching puberty at younger ages.
- Multiple studies confirm that certain chemicals affect breast development in ways that may increase risk for breast cancer.
- We are learning about the importance of the TIMING of exposures and the effects they have on the progression of breast development and puberty.

WINDOWS OF SUSCEPTIBILITY

Hormones are known to be important in breast cancer. Research is evolving which suggests there are times over a woman's lifespan when she is more at risk from exposures to things in her environment because hormone levels are high and/or are changing rapidly. **Chemicals commonly used in pesticides, flame retardants and in personal care products are known endocrine disruptors – they have the ability to disrupt normal hormonal and biological changes.** Using animal models to study these Windows of Susceptibility, researchers have found disruption in breast development, even from in-utero exposure, but the **primary window of importance seems to be pre-pubertal – before a girl enters puberty.**

Scientists acknowledge the difficulty of proving direct correlations between a certain chemical and development of cancer. However, it is clear that there is enough evidence of harm to warrant avoiding chemicals known to be endocrine disruptors. Families can take personal action by selecting safer products in their homes; however, **there is a vital role that policy makers must play in regulating the use of these chemicals in public space.** While we are pursuing definitive proof that these chemicals contribute to breast cancer development, we should acknowledge the body of evidence that does exist, and take actions to avoid exposure to those chemicals.

Our daughters' health and well-being is not something we are willing to take a chance with.

Staff and members of the WBCC have attended numerous scientific conferences on this topic. Our membership includes several graduates of National Breast Cancer Coalition's Project LEAD (an intensive multi-day course on the science of breast cancer), we are represented annually as advocate reviewers of grant proposals for the Department of Defense Breast Cancer Research Program, and we currently serve as a Community Partner for research being done at University of Wisconsin -Madison as part of the Breast Cancer and The Environment Research Program (BCERP), sponsored by the National Institutes of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) and the National Cancer Institute (NCI). For more information call us at 414-963-2103 or email wbcc@standupandspeakout.org