

# THE TRUTH ABOUT TOXINS IN BREASTMILK

It is difficult to find balanced information on this subject. Unfortunately when breastfeeding is dealt with by the media there is often little attempt to look into these subjects from a parent's point of view and much doubt and confusion is created amongst breastfeeding families.

'Problems of pollution are with all of us every day in the modern world. Toxins in mothers' bodies from pollution potentially affect ALL babies during pregnancy, when babies are at their most vulnerable. Despite any pollutants that may pass into breast milk, babies still have better health and fewer illnesses when they are breastfed instead of being formula fed. But how much better it would be if none of us or our children were being exposed to any pollutants in the first place.' (Association of Breastfeeding Mothers.)

This issue is of great concern to parents but it is important to try to keep a clear perspective on this. After all there has never been a "product recall" on breastmilk! Yet there are hundreds of incidences over the years where formula has been recalled due to contamination, manufacturing defects or poor quality of product. There is also the problem of wrong mixing of feeds or using contaminated water.

## 1. The Bad News

There has been much concern about the presence of toxins in breastmilk particularly DIOXINS and PCBs.

### *What exactly are 'DIOXINS'?*

They are basically toxic waste, created and released through the production of chemicals, pesticides, herbicides, chlorine bleaching of products, production of plastics, rubber, petrol, smoking etc. Dioxins are the most toxic compound known and the only way to deal with them is to stop their production.

### *They sound pretty nasty but what is the problem?*

All types of toxic waste promote and enhance cancer and cause birth defects. One drop of liquid dioxin diluted in an Olympic size swimming pool is strong enough to kill a small animal.

### *Where do you find dioxins?*

Dioxins end up in the atmosphere, water and soil. They settle on the surface of plants, fruit and veg and are ingested by humans. Once they enter the food chain they are difficult to eradicate.

Dioxins have an affinity for fats and accumulate in fatty areas which explains the presence of a higher concentration in breastmilk. Studies in Denmark, Sweden and Norway showed that a breastfed baby's intake of dioxin is higher than the recommended Tolerable Weekly Intake (TWI).

**REMEMBER The problem of course, is not with breastmilk, but with the pollution that gets into our bodies; breastmilk is just an easy way to measure it.**

## 2. The Good News

The TWI is estimated assuming a life long intake at this level not the limited time that the baby is at the breast. As the baby grows the concentration of dioxins does not increase in the babies fat.

The nutritional benefits far outweigh the danger of contamination. The concentration of dioxins is smaller than if you took your baby for a walk in a town centre. Toxin levels are greater in the first two months after birth and decrease as lactation advances.

Giving up breastfeeding in response to dioxin levels is self defeating **as artificial milk contains higher levels of both lead and aluminium and many ingredients have a higher risk of contamination e.g cotton seed oil, sunflower oil and beef tallow all come into contact with dioxins.** Milk produced inside of a mother has significantly less chance of contamination.

### The irony of it all...

The production of formula milk will lead to an increase in pollution and dioxin levels. Artificial milk is a processed, non-renewable resource. Dioxins are produced as a result of the production of formula through:

- rubber, silicon, glass, plastic for bottles
- tin and packaging production
- waste from disposal of these items
- waste water
- production of sterilising
- more nappies
- waste energy to heat milk
- transporting the milk from factory to shop

In the USA if every baby was bottlefed, 550 million milk tins would be discarded over a two year period.

A decision not to breastfeed will lead to an increase in the dioxins in breastmilk because of the increase in environmental dioxin levels.

If you are in anyway worried about issues relating to breastfeeding, contact Lucia, NCT Breastfeeding Counsellor on 01666 841281 or the National Breastfeeding Helpline on 0870 44 8708.

More Info:

[WWW.ibfan.org](http://WWW.ibfan.org)

[www.laleche.org.uk](http://www.laleche.org.uk)

[www.babymilkaction.org](http://www.babymilkaction.org)

[www.babycentre.co.uk](http://www.babycentre.co.uk)