

CHEMICALS, ALLERGIES: DOCTORS SPEAK OUT

15 Mar 2000

Medical experts have criticised the lack of control over chemicals present in a range of household products, in a key new report published today [1]. The authors are doctors from the British Society for Allergy, Environmental and Nutritional Medicine (BSAENM). They warn that exposure to perfumes, household chemicals or air pollution can lead to symptoms including allergies and fatigue

The report, "*Multiple Chemical Sensitivity Recognition and Management*", calls on the Government to tighten the regulation of chemical use. The new controls should include tighter rules on the authorisation of chemicals. They should also require the removal of persistent chemicals from our food.

Dr Keith Eaton, one of the report's authors, commented:

"Our report confirms the problems caused to some individuals by exposure to chemicals. These patients need better diagnosis and treatment. They also need to be protected by the Government from chemicals which contaminate our food and environment."

EU research has shown that only 14% of the most heavily used chemicals have a full set of basic safety data [2]. Commenting on this, Dr Michael Warhurst, Chemicals Campaigner at Friends of the Earth, said:

"We are all exposed to too many poorly understood chemicals. It is time the Government forced industry to only use chemicals that they have shown to be safe."

Friends of the Earth is calling for five key policies to create a safe and precautionary regulatory system for chemicals - see note [3] for details.

Both the main authors of the report and two sufferers of multiple chemical sensitivity are available for interview [4] Copies of the Report and/or Executive Summary are available from
FOE Press Office.

NOTES TO EDITORS:

[1] 'Multiple Chemical Sensitivity Recognition & Management. A document on the health effects of everyday chemical exposures and their implications'. Third Scientific Report of The British Society for Allergy, Environmental and Nutritional Medicine. K. K. Eaton and H.M. Anthony (moderators). **Short executive summary available from FOE**. Full report costs £10 incl P&P, cheque to BSAENM, PO Box 7, Knighton, LD7 1WT or credit card 0906 3020010 (50p/min).

[2] Only 14% of chemicals produced or imported at >1000 tonnes/year in the EU have a basic set of safety data publicly available, according to the EU's own chemicals body, the European Chemicals Bureau. Public Availability of Data on EU High Production Volume Chemicals', European Chemical Bureau, 1999. Available at <http://ecb.ei.jrc.it/Data-Availability-Documents/datavail.pdf> (PDF†)

[3] Friends of the Earth's 5 key policies for sustainable use of chemicals are:

- i. A full right to know, including what chemicals are present in products.
- ii. A deadline by which all chemicals on the market must have had their safety independently assessed. All uses of a chemical should be approved and should be demonstrated to be safe beyond reasonable doubt.
- iii. A phase out of persistent or bioaccumulative chemicals. (chemicals that stick around in the environment or accumulate in our bodies)
- iv. A requirement to substitute less safe chemicals with safer alternatives.
- v. A commitment to stop all releases to the environment of hazardous substances by 2020.

[4] The **moderators of the report**, Dr Keith Eaton and Dr Honor Anthony are both available for interview, as are **two victims of multiple chemical sensitivity** (one based in Yorkshire, the other in Middlesex). Contact FOE for details.

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