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## Environmental group co-founder talks about chemicals found in humans

By [Paul Wood](#)

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CHAMPAIGN – If you make a dangerous chemical in a pesticide lab, 120 laws regulate your work.

Cross the hall and do it in a consumer products lab – 0 regulations, says Kenneth A. Cook, who co-founded the Environmental Working Group in 2002.

Cook was in town Monday as the guest of state Rep. Naomi D. Jakobsson, D-Urbana. She's the sponsor of a bill that would ban phthalates in children's products, another one of Cook's concerns.

Though phthalates are considered hazardous waste and are regulated as air and water pollutants, the Environmental Working Group contends, they are unregulated in food, cosmetics and consumer and medical products.

Your body is full of chemicals, many of them necessary for life itself, and not a few you'd probably rather live without.

When Cook's group took samples from 10 Americans in 2004, they found 287 industrial chemicals among them, some of them banned as long ago as the 1970s.

That may not be too shocking if you've worked in an asbestos mine or chemical factory, but these 10 Americans hadn't, Cook said. Nor did they have bad eating habits.

The 10 samples were from umbilical, or cord, blood, from babies born in August and September of 2004.

The Washington, D.C.-based group spent about \$10,000 per blood sample for chemical analysis, Cook said. He believes a more complete lab test might have found even more contaminants.

Mothers, after all, might have even more contaminants in them, Cook said, noting that the firstborn of siblings gets the biggest sampling from the chemicals in the mother's body.

Some of the chemicals found have been declared extremely dangerous, such as dioxin, he added.

In some conditions, such as autism and children's brain cancer, scientists have questioned whether a chemical in a food or vaccine triggered a pre-existing condition, Cook said.

He's asking drug companies to voluntarily cut back on or stop making some chemicals high on his danger list.

And he's working with state legislators like Jakobsson to enact laws at every level of government.

"Sometimes it's the state legislators who are most passionate about these issues," he said.

### On the Web

The complete Environmental Working Group report on contaminants found in cord blood from the Red Cross is found at <http://archive.ewg.org/reports/bodyburden2/>.

Find this article at:

[http://www.news-gazette.com/news/2008/04/01/cofounder\\_talks\\_about\\_chemicals\\_found\\_in](http://www.news-gazette.com/news/2008/04/01/cofounder_talks_about_chemicals_found_in)

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