

## Perfumes

The widespread use of herbicides, pesticides and plastics have created a problem that has never before existed on this planet. We are polluting our environment and ourselves in a sea of estrogen-like mimics. They are everywhere: in the air, water, soil, and over abundantly in our bodies. Called xeno-estrogens, these are substances which have a powerful estrogenic effect on the body, are fat-soluble and non-biodegradable. They are also dangerously toxic.

We presently live in a world awash with petrochemicals. Petrochemicals are everywhere. Our machines run on petrochemicals, and millions of products including plastics, microchips, medicines, clothing, foods, soaps, pesticides and even perfumes are either made from petrochemicals or contain them. The popular slogan in the early 1950s, "Better Living Through Chemistry", is returning to haunt us.

The legacy of this pollution has resulted in an epidemic of reproductive abnormalities, including the steadily increasing number of cancers of the reproductive tract, infertility, low sperm- counts, poor sperm-quality and the feminisation of males. The potential consequences of this overexposure are staggering, especially considering that one of the consequences is the passing on of reproductive abnormalities to offspring.

Just how serious is this problem? In a May 1993 article in the British medical journal, The Lancet, researchers in Scotland and Denmark hypothesized that xeno-estrogens are responsible for a steadily declining sperm-count in men. According to Neils Skakkebeak of the University of Copenhagen, sperm counts have dropped by more than 50 per cent since 1940. Meanwhile, the rate of testicular and prostate cancer in the United States and Europe has tripled in the past 50 years. Reproductive abnormalities such as undescended testicles have become increasingly common.

Xeno-estrogens are also implicated in impaired brain development in children. They are also directly implicated in the 30 to 80 per cent increase in breast, ovarian and uterine cancers in women over the past 50 years.

In some rural communities in Australia, where heavy pesticide use has left residuals in drinking water, there have been reports of boys with abnormally small penises, along with reports of the feminisation of males and the masculinisation of females.

It is time for us to wake up and pay heed to these warnings for the sake of future generations. You can play your part in protecting your grandchildren and great-grandchildren in the same ways you can protect yourself: by refusing to use pesticides, minimizing your use of plastics, purchasing hormone-free meat and organic produce, using 'green' products for detergents and household cleaners, and, in general, using 'natural' products in favor of petrochemical products.