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PHYSICIANS FOR  
SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY<sup>®</sup>

U.S. affiliate of International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War,  
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# Who is Most burdened by Toxic Chemicals

**C**ertain populations are more impacted by toxic chemical exposures than others. And they need greater protection from dangerous chemicals

## Pregnant Women

Scientists originally thought the placenta shielded cord blood and the developing fetus from most chemicals and pollutants in the environment. This is not the case: Even before birth, a child is exposed to hundreds of chemicals. There seems to be special windows of vulnerability in the development of fetuses when chemicals can have long-term, irreversible effects on reproductive and neurological systems.

## Children

Children's rapidly developing bodies are uniquely vulnerable to damage by chemicals. Children ingest more food and water relative to their body weight, they are constantly on the ground where contaminants collect, their defenses are not fully developed, and their high skin-to-body-mass ratio means they are more sponge-like than adults.



## Workers

Workers in certain jobs and industries can be exposed to high levels of toxic chemicals, as well as mixtures of different types of harmful substances. For example, the

men and women who manufacture chemicals, and the workers who use those chemicals to process food, make paper, clean office buildings, schools and hospitals, and produce cars and trucks can be exposed to larger doses of certain chemicals as well as to a greater number of chemicals, resulting in adverse impacts on their health.

## "Hot-spot" communities

Toxic chemical exposures create specific burdens borne by communities of color, Indigenous peoples, and low-income communities. They are exposed to chemicals through consumer products and frequently to industrial and chemical plants in their neighborhoods. They also are frequently afflicted by "legacy" chemicals from prior industrial land uses. These communities across the U.S. bear a disproportionate impact of a wide array of chemical exposures. As a result their health is often disproportionately harmed by exposure to a wide array of chemicals.



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*We can protect our most impacted populations -- including children, pregnant women, workers and hot-spot communities -- from toxic chemicals by passing health-protective, commonsense chemicals policy reform.*

## Here's what a truly health-protective law would do:

- Establish clear protections for children, pregnant women, workers, and hotspot communities heavily affected by pollution and toxic chemicals.
- Require that chemicals be shown to be safe to remain in use, rather than require they be shown harmful to be removed.
- Empower the EPA to move quickly on the worst chemicals, including bans and phase-outs if necessary.
- Utilize the most modern chemical testing methods that take into account cumulative exposures, timing of exposures, and individual vulnerabilities.
- Expand chemical assessments to include non-chemical stressors such as socioeconomic factors and proximity to hotspots when appraising health threats or hazards.
- Increase the flow of information about chemicals that are known "bad actors" to enhance innovation of safer alternatives.
- Incentivize industry to design the hazards out of products and practices in the first place.
- Preserve states' rights to regulate chemicals and be more protective than federal standards.



*Health professionals are powerful messengers on behalf of strong, health-protective policy.*

**Get involved! Anyone can become a member of Physicians for Social Responsibility. If you share our goal of protecting our health from the threat of toxic chemicals, please join today! Visit us at [www.PSR.org](http://www.PSR.org)**

## How can you get involved?

We need to demand that policy makers rewrite the Toxic Substances Control Act to protect the public's health. New toxics legislation must remove harmful chemicals from the marketplace and prevent new ones from being used without adequate advance testing.

Go to <http://tinyurl.com/PSR-Toxics> to find out more about toxic chemicals and the campaign to reform US laws to protect the health of all communities.

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