

Shampoo linked to sperm

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The theory is getting international attention and even skeptics agree it should be investigated.

Scandinavian researchers say chemicals known as alkyl-phenol ethoxylades, used in shampoos and other products, can act like the female sex-hormone estrogen.

Boys exposed to such chemicals before puberty could suffer disruption of their hormonal processes, said Jorma Toppari of the University of Turku in Finland.

"We know that these compounds are hormonally active, and we know that you can influence sperm counts by exposing a child or a fetus to hormones that act like these compounds," he told a conference on Great Lakes water quality in Duluth, Minn.

Studies show sperm counts in several countries have declined dramatically in the past 30 to 50 years.

Researchers have focused on pesticides, dioxins and organic chlorines. The suspicion over alkyl-phenol ethoxylades is new.

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Shampoo linked to decline in sperm quality

OTTAWA (CP) -- Researchers are pointing to shampoo as a possible factor in the apparent decline of sperm quality in many countries.

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of their hormonal processes, said Jorma Toppari of the University of Turku in Finland

"These are the compounds we really should look at," Toppari, leading expert on male reproductive health, said.

"We know that these compounds are hormonally active and we know that you can influence sperm counts by exposing a child or a fetus to hormones that act like these compounds."

Toppari spoke at a conference on Great Lakes water quality held this week at Duluth, Minn.

Research interest in male reproductive health has exploded following studies indicating that sperm counts in several countries have declined dramatically in the past 30-50 years.

In 1992, Danish researchers, drawing on existing scientific literature, reported a decrease in sperm concentration and semen volume in otherwise normal men over the period 1938-90.

The Danish study initially met skepticism, but researchers in France, Scotland and Belgium have obtained similar results.