

PRESS RELEASE

Endocrine disrupting chemicals: a public health problem in your shopping bag

- **Health expert says the number of people suffering from diseases related to a dysfunction of the endocrine (hormone) system is increasing daily**
- **Top health authorities call for action to prevent the risks of exposure to endocrine disrupting chemicals (EDCs), which are present in the everyday environment**
- **New figures will show the huge savings that could be made in Spain each year from better EU regulation of EDCs**

Madrid, 26 February 2015 – At a workshop on Friday, Fundación Alborada and the Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL) aim to put a spotlight on the costs to public health in Spain associated with exposure to endocrine (or hormone) disrupting chemicals (EDCs) and what needs to be done. (1)

EDCs are substances that disrupt our hormones and interfere with normal functioning of the hormonal system. These chemicals act like hormones, such as estrogens or androgens, and can mimic or block the action of our own hormones. It is currently estimated that there are thousands of products on the market that contain EDCs: food packaging, cosmetics, textiles, toys, pesticides, cleaning products, kitchen utensils and so on.

Professor Nicolás Olea, University of Grenada, who will address the workshop says: *“Chemical components from plastics and cosmetics are found in the urine of our children. The negative impact of these substances on human hormones has been demonstrated. How much of this exposure can be avoided and who should act applying the precautionary principle? Should each of us personally be responsible or should this be in the hands of the policy makers?”*

The conditions that have been linked to exposure to EDCs, include diabetes and obesity, autism and ADHD, hormone-related cancers, such as those of the breast, prostate and testes, and infertility.

President of the Alborada Foundation and workshop host, Dr. Pilar Muñoz-Calero says these hormone-related conditions are increasing. *“Every day the number of people suffering from diseases related to a dysfunction of the endocrine system is increasing. In our medical consultations, we continually encounter cases of obesity, neurological disorders, infertility ...”*

A recent report from the Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL) says that the rate at which couples are seeking medical assistance due to infertility is increasing at more than 10% per year. A Spanish study showed recently that the sperm concentration of young men was falling by an average of 2% per year. (2) HEAL will present new estimates of the costs to public health in Spain of exposure to EDCs during the course of the workshop.

Expert evidence

In the report, "State of the science of endocrine disruptors" published in 2013, the World Health Organization (WHO) and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) assess the scientific findings on EDCs from the past decade. They found that the evidence of a possible link between chemicals and health problems has significantly increased and conclude that exposure to EDCs pose a global threat that must be addressed. (3)

The roundtable event in Madrid, including scientists, researchers, doctors, policy makers and NGO representatives, will discuss the current situation of science and policy on EDCs in Spain and the European Union. Speakers include renowned Spanish Professor Nicolas Olea from the University of Granada and MEP Paloma Lopez Bermejo. (1)

Dr Muñoz-Calero of Alborada Foundation will present a briefing about the link between EDCs and Multiple Chemical Sensitivity (MCS). *"In the case of Multiple Chemical Sensitivity, one of the triggers is usually an EDC, although the body is also exposed to a toxic load of many other contaminants," she says.*

Multiple Chemical Sensitivity (MCS), which affects approximately 5-15% of the population in industrialised countries, is characterised by an adverse reaction to low, environmental levels of certain chemicals found in the air, food and water.

HEAL works to bring attention to opportunities for preventing chronic conditions through the promotion of a less toxic environment. Nadia El Bennich, HEAL's Chemicals Health and Project Coordinator will present new figures on the costs of exposure to EDCs in Spain. She will also present the findings of a HEAL report published last year on the health costs related to EDC exposure in the European Union (2). It puts the total annual costs in the EU at €31 billion - approximately 5% of the total costs diseases and conditions linked to hormone disruption, which totals about €636 to €637 billion per year in the EU.

"For the EU as a whole, health savings of up to €31 billion per year would be possible if action were taken to reduce everyday exposure to hormone disrupting chemicals, which are present in food, water, cosmetics and many plastics," says Nadia El Bennich, HEAL's Chemicals Health and Project Coordinator.

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Notes for Journalists

1. Mesa redonda: Agentes que alteran tu salud. Venue: El huerto de Lucas. C/ San Lucas, 13 (Madrid, metro Chueca). More information in Spanish <http://www.fundacion-alborada.org/2013-02-09-12-16-8/667-agentes-que-alteran-tu-salud> and English <http://www.chemicalshealthmonitor.org/blog/conference-on-edcs-health-impacts-and-public-health-costs-in-madrid/>

2. Health costs in the EU: How much is related to Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals? Health and Environment Alliance, June 2014. Available in English and Spanish - <http://www.env-health.org/news/latest-news/article/health-costs-in-the-eu-how-much-is>

3. State of the science of endocrine disrupting chemicals – 2012. An assessment of the state of the science of endocrine disruptors prepared by a group of experts for the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and WHO <http://www.who.int/ceh/publications/endocrine/en/>

The Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL) is a leading European not-for-profit organisation addressing how the environment affects health in the European Union (EU). With the support of more than 70 member organisations, HEAL brings independent expertise and evidence from the health community to different decision-making processes. Our broad alliance represents health professionals, not-for-profit health insurers, doctors, nurses, cancer and asthma groups, citizens, women's groups, youth groups, environmental NGOs, scientists and public health research institutes. Members include international and Europe-wide organisations as well as national and local groups. Website: www.env-health.org Follow HEAL on [Facebook](#) and Twitter [@HealthandEnv](#), [@EDCFree](#) and [@CHM_HEAL](#)

The Alborada Foundation has spent a decade successfully helping people suffering from MCS and other environmental illnesses through its clinical services, by training health professionals and by raising awareness at all levels. Website: <http://www.fundacion-alborada.org/> . Follow Fundacion Alborada on [Facebook](#) and on Twitter [@FundAlborada](#)