



Issue Brief

BIOMONITORING

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ISSUE SUMMARY

Biomonitoring is a tool to help better understand human exposure to environmental chemicals – both natural and man-made. It identifies certain substances in the body at the time of measurement. If gathered from a representative sample of a population – for instance, children or adults in a particular area – biomonitoring can be used to document whether that subgroup as a whole has been exposed to some chemicals.

Biomonitoring does *not* provide information about (1) where the exposure came from, (2) how long a substance has been in the body or (3) what effect, if any, that substance may have on the body. The answers to these questions must come from related research. Research that the chemical industry is committed to sponsoring.

INDUSTRY VIEWS

- **We support the use of biomonitoring information in the proper context, as a tool to help further protect and improve public health.** Without context, information on the presence of a substance may be misinterpreted. As the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) states on its website, “the measurement of an environmental chemical in a person’s blood or urine does not by itself mean that the chemical causes disease. Advances in analytical methods allow us to measure low levels of environmental chemicals in people; only studies of varying exposure levels and health effects determine which blood and urine levels result in disease.”
- **Biomonitoring is a complex technology.** Scientists and medical professionals – in government, academia and industry – know that biomonitoring data must be developed, validated and analyzed properly. Data from this tool can be used to set priorities for research on the potential human health effects of environmental chemicals.
- **We must avoid the misuse of biomonitoring data.** Used incorrectly, information on the mere presence of trace amounts of substances in the body may be misinterpreted and could create unwarranted alarm.
- **Instead, we advocate that biomonitoring be a part of an overall strategy that relies upon a strong scientific foundation to help take the guesswork out of policy-making.** As one component of scientific risk assessment, biomonitoring data can demonstrate that some type of exposure occurred. Then, through further research, potential health impacts may be better understood.



- **The more that government, media, industry and the public understand, the better our decision-making will be.** In addition to individual company research, the chemical industry as a whole is committed to long-range research to expand scientific knowledge and to continue evaluating chemicals and their potential impact on human health and the environment.

RESOURCES

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention <http://www.cdc.gov/>

American Council on Science and Health

http://www.acsh.org/doclib/20041110_traces_2003.pdf

