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## Rocket Fuel Chemical Found in Food, Water Supply

**Studies Being Done to Determine Long-Term Effects of Small Amounts of Perchlorate on Human Health**

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**GOOD MORNING AMERICA**

Perchlorate, a chemical used in rocket fuel, is turning up in the nation's food -- in vegetables like lettuce and spinach -- and water supply.



(PhotoDisc )

You've never heard of it? Most Americans haven't, but millions have been exposed to it. This week Congress held hearings to determine just how dangerous it is to humans' health.

"A study from the Centers for Disease Control last year tested almost 3,000 people who are representative of the U.S. population. They found perchlorate in every single person," said Dr. Anila Jacob of the Environmental Working Group.

so how did something used to launch inter-continental missiles and the space shuttle find its way into our homes?

At a hearing of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce this week, a government report was made public for the first time revealing that at sites in more than 25 states, perchlorate had leaked into the drinking water and soil. About 65 percent of that contamination was attributed to the Department of Defense and to NASA.

The Pentagon said it has invested "over \$114 million in research related to perchlorate toxicity," and that they are "developing substitute chemicals."

Doctors agree that large amounts of the chemical can lead to thyroid problems in adults and abnormal brain development in children, but it is still unknown how much damage smaller amounts can inflict.

"The developing fetus can have severe inhibition of brain development as a result of perchlorate intake by the mother through drinking water or through breast milk," Rep. Albert Wynn, D-Md. said.

Democrats on Capitol Hill are working on a bill that would require the EPA for the first time to set strict guidelines limiting the amount of perchlorate in the nation's drinking water.

For now, more research is being done to determine if the amounts present today can cause any serious damage to people's health. **End**

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**Loma Linda Doctors Defend Human Study**

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**By Tom Verdin**

**L O M A L I N D A, Nov. 29, 2007**

Doctors doing a study of a toxic water pollutant defended feeding it to human participants, saying the potential medical benefit outweighed the risk.

The Loma Linda University Medical Center researchers held a news conference Tuesday to respond to media reports raising concerns about people being given doses of perchlorate, a chemical used in rocket fuel that has contaminated ground water in parts of Southern California.

The hospital's institutional review board, which oversees clinical trials, concluded that participants would face minimal risk. Researchers said the perchlorate doses being given in the study are about 100 times lower than those given to people who are prescribed perchlorate for thyroid illnesses.

Dr. Anthony Firek, the study's principal investigator, said the dosages are also lower than those given in a study published earlier this year by Harvard University. Nine men received 10 milligrams of perchlorate daily in that study.

Loma Linda researchers are giving participants doses ranging from a half-milligram to three milligrams. Half of the participants get placebos.

#### Doses Exceed Drinking Water Limits

But the daily doses in the Loma Linda study are still up to 83 times higher than drinking-water limits for perchlorate recommended by California's Department of Health Services.

Dr. William Saukel, chairman of Loma Linda's review board, said the study likely will produce information beneficial to the population as a whole.

So far, just eight people have enrolled in the study, which began in early October. Researchers hope to eventually enroll 100 people who each will be paid \$1,000 for seven months of participation.

Participants are informed of the risks of the research, which include bone marrow suppression, lessening of white and red blood cell counts and thyroid problems.

Lockheed Martin \_ which faces hundreds of lawsuits accusing it of creating perchlorate pollution and threatening the health of San Bernardino and Riverside counties\_ residents \_ is paying for the study. The aerospace company's officials have said the study will help determine the health risk of perchlorate.

Barry Taylor, Loma Linda's vice president for research affairs, said university officials discussed the company's possible motivations. \_But on the other hand, he said, \_people on the committee recognized that they could see medical use coming out of this.

Could Lead to Treatments The idea for the study came from medical researchers, not Lockheed, researchers said. Firek said the study is being conducted to determine how best to diagnose and treat any illnesses caused by perchlorate in drinking water.

Perchlorate has been used as a rocket-fuel oxidizer since the 1940s, and is thought to have contaminated water supplies in parts of Riverside and San Bernardino counties, as well as the San Gabriel Valley east of Los Angeles.

In large doses, it can slow down the thyroid, which produces the hormone that controls infants' brain development and growth in older children. In adults, the thyroid regulates such things as temperature and blood cholesterol. Some people with thyroid illnesses are prescribed perchlorate to help treat their conditions.

Firek indicated that doctors treating such patients are seeing some problems they think could be related to perchlorate. A clinical trial is the only way to determine whether that is the case, he said.