Link found between environment, child disorders

10:02 PM PDT on Tuesday, September 16, 2008

By GARY CHITTIM / KING 5 News

Video: Link between environment and human health

SEATTLE -- Some of the modern products designed to make our lives easier, safer and cleaner may be threatening our health down the road.

On Tuesday, a group of influential scientists involved in the Learning and Developmental Disabilities Initiative agreed that chemicals accumulated in our bodies are leading to all kinds of problems.

Teachers were among the first to notice it with growing ratios of children developing learning and behavioral problems. Researchers looking for answers realized they may be right at our fingertips.

There is an ocean of available information out there in samples of our blood, our hair and bodily fluids taken to detect specific disorders. In them are chemicals we normally associate with environmental problems.

"Right now, every adult and every child have these chemicals in our bodies. We don't really understand what they do in mixtures," said Elise Miller, Institute for Children’s Environmental Health.

One hundred top child health experts are now convinced blends of those chemicals are building up in young bodies and emerging as neurological disorders. The evidence they say is so overwhelming, they can no longer stay silent while certain products continue to introduce the substances.

Maybe it shouldn't come as any surprise at all. For years we've known we have PCBs, flame retardants, lead, acid and all kinds of other problems plaguing Puget Sound.

The scientists are saying we have those same problems in our bodies, and while they may emerge under names like ADD, autism and other names in our youth, scientists are finding chemical links to names like dementia and Alzheimer’s as we age.

"The reason it's so important, we have a hundred scientists, health officials and advocates signing on, is..."
that we know this information is out there. We know we can take action on most of right now,” said Miller.

The group admits curbing our dependence will not be easy, but they say Washington state has acted to ban persistent chemicals in toys and electronics. Industry groups have already started finding alternatives.