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Program on
Breast Cancer and Environmental Risk Factors

SPRECHER
INSTITUTE
for Comparative
Cancer Research

Biomonitoring

Frequently Asked Questions

■ Question

Is biomonitoring a new concept?

■ Answer

The United States had a biomonitoring program from 1967 to 1990 called the National Human Monitoring Program. It was run by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and included monitoring organochlorine chemicals in human fat samples. This program, called the National Human Adipose Tissue Survey, was phased out in 1990. Since 1990, the CDC has conducted limited biomonitoring, mostly connected with Super Fund chemicals. The CDC has followed trends in levels lead, solvents and pesticides in blood.

The modern biomonitoring movement and new programs started in the mid 1990s. Dr. Lynn Goldman, then an administrator with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), recommended a public health approach to monitoring environmental chemicals in 1995. By 1998, the Pew Environmental Health Commission was established at Johns Hopkins University. In their report the Pew Commission recommended a coordinated environmental public health tracking system that would establish a national biomonitoring program that would be linked to systems tracking human diseases.

The CDC was given the mandate to develop the biomonitoring program, and develop the infrastructure for a public health tracking program. Other initiatives are underway at other agencies. (For more information, see [Biomonitoring Links](#).)

Answered by: [Suzanne Snedeker, Ph.D.](#)

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Program on Breast Cancer and Environmental Risk Factors
Cornell University, College of Veterinary Medicine
Vet Box 31, Ithaca, NY 14853-6401
Phone: 607.254.2893; Fax: 607.254.4730
Email: breastcancer@cornell.edu



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