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Babies in womb exposed to harmful chemicals: Study

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LONDON: Babies are exposed to certain harmful chemicals before they are even born, finds a new study that lays stress on the need for pregnant women to be careful about their diet.

Scientists led by Maria Jose Lopez Espinosa at the University of Granada, Spain, tested blood samples taken from the placentas of pregnant women and found up to 15 different types of pesticide, reported the online edition of *Daily Mail*.

The research was carried out at San Cecilio University Hospital among 308 women who had given birth between 2000 and 2002. Worryingly, the chemicals were found in every single one of the women tested.

The study also found a higher presence of pesticides in older mothers and those who had a higher Body Mass Index.

High levels of exposure to certain chemicals have been linked to reproductive abnormalities because they upset the hormonal development of the embryo.

The effects are already being seen in nature where some species of fish and animals with deformed sex organs have been found.

Scientists blame agricultural pesticides and other hazardous chemicals such as those found in flame retardants that have leaked into the environment.

Last year, a similar report by World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) UK and Greenpeace found that babies are being exposed to a whole array of chemicals at the most vulnerable point in their development.

Blood tests of 30 newborn babies found the presence of eight different groups of chemicals, ranging from cleaning products to chemicals used to make plastics and non-stick waterproof coatings.

A study led by scientists at the University of Rochester in New York also found that common chemicals found in thousands of household products such as soaps and make-up can harm the development of unborn babies.

The results reinforce calls for pregnant women to be especially careful about their diet and for the reduction of chemicals in food production.

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