

Press Release No. 61/2008

Press Relations Officer: Martin Ittershagen
PR-staff: Anke Döpke, Dieter Leutert,
Fotini Mavromati, Theresa Pfeifer, Martin Stallmann
Address: Postfach 1406, 06813 Dessau-Roßlau
Telephone: +49 340/21 03-2122, -2827, -2250, -2318, -3927, -2507
E-Mail: pressestelle@uba.de
Internet: www.umweltbundesamt.de



A healthy start in life

The impact of the environment on infants, unborn children and fertility - new brochure for parents

Unborn children and infants often react differently-- in many cases considerably more sensitively- than do adults or older children to pollutants, radiation or other environmental influences. They are sometimes particularly exposed to the harmful effects of passive smoking or poor indoor air quality. So what can expectant mothers and parents of young children really do to protect their infants and unborn children? Which risks can be easily avoided and where can one go for more help? There is clear advice on topics such as pollutant contamination in the household, the importance of breastfeeding, the quality of baby food, or safe toys in a free brochure titled Start ins Leben - Einflüsse aus der Umwelt auf Säuglinge, ungeborene Kinder und die Fruchtbarkeit [Starting life - environmental influences on infants, unborn children, and fertility]. It has been published jointly by the Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR), the Federal Office for Radiation Protection (BfS), the Robert Koch Institute (RKI), Federal Centre for Health Education (BZgA), and the Federal Environment Agency (UBA). The brochure was issued in time for the Federal Government's open house day on 23-24 August 2008.

Reports about harmful substances in children's toys or in food, air pollution, radiation from mobile phones, or new pathogens borne as a consequence of climate change, have raised fears among many parents that the natural and living environments of their unborn or small children are causing them particular harm. The first contact person concerning potential health risks posed by the environment is very often the gynaecologist or paediatrician, even though competent answers are not always easy to find in light of the many possible risks. The new brochure offers guidance for many typical issues as concerns child health. Mothers and fathers are advised on how to handle the potential risks posed to their child and on where to go for professional help. Parents as well as public health office and child care workers will find useful advice in the publication.

The brochure was produced in the course of the 'Action Programme Environment and Health' (APUG), for which all contributing institutions cooperated with the Federal Ministries for Environment, Health, and Consumer Protection.

The *Start ins Leben - Einflüsse aus der Umwelt auf Säuglinge, ungeborene Kinder und die Fruchtbarkeit* [*Starting life - environmental influences on infants, unborn children, and fertility*] brochure is available free of charge from GVP Gemeinnützige Werkstätten Bonn, In den Wiesen 1-3, 53227 Bonn, tel: 01888 3053355 and by e-mail order: uba@broschuerenversand.de. It can also be downloaded on the Internet at <http://www.umweltdaten.de/publikationen/fpdf-l/3518.pdf> and www.apug.de.

Dessau-Roßlau, 22 August 2008