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Mother's milk safety pledge is disputed

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — A panel of federal and private health specialists has been accused of being "very misleading" in concluding that mothers can continue to breast-feed their babies despite contamination of their milk by a toxic industrial chemical called PCBs.

The Department of Health, Education, and Welfare Committee to Coordinate Toxicology on PCBs in Mothers' Milk "failed to adequately deal with the issue" at a meeting here on Sept. 23, according to a joint statement Saturday by Dr. Joseph Highland of the Environmental Defense Fund and Stephanie Harris of the Health Research Group.

PCBs, which concentrate in fatty tissue and remain there for years, first came into wide use in the 1930s, mainly in electrical equipment. Not until the mid-1960s did researchers discover that PCBs — polychlorinated biphenyls — had contaminated the air, water and soil of all industrialized countries. Last week, Monsanto Chemical Co., the only American manufacturer, announced that it was ending production.

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