

✘ This being Valentine's Day, it seemed like a good time for a posting on endocrine disrupters. Not being an expert on the topic, I first turned to the EPA's website. There I was reminded that a 1996 statute requires EPA to screen chemicals for this effect. Proceeding at its usual hectic pace, ten years later the EPA is still trying to [figure out](#) which chemicals to test. As helpful background, EPA does [explain](#):

In recent years, some scientists have proposed that chemicals might inadvertently be disrupting the endocrine system of humans and wildlife. A variety of chemicals have been found to disrupt the endocrine systems of animals in laboratory studies, and there is strong evidence that chemical exposure has been associated with adverse developmental and reproductive effects on fish and wildlife in particular locations. The relationship of human diseases of the endocrine system and exposure to environmental contaminants, however, is poorly understood and scientifically controversial.

In case the language about "poorly understood and scientifically controversial" was making you feel too comfortable, EPA then goes on to give DES as an example. You may recall that DES is not only an endocrine disrupter but can cause cancer in the daughters of women exposed during pregnancy.

Just to give you more to consider, Greenfacts [reports](#) that endocrine disrupters *may* be causing:

- * reductions in male fertility,
- * abnormalities in male reproductive organs,
- * female reproductive diseases,
- * earlier puberty, and
- * declines in the numbers of males born.

If you want to dig into the science more deeply, [this report](#) by the World Health Organization looks like a good starting point.

Of course, nobody really knows if endocrine disrupters are a serious problem at this. But it sure would be nice if EPA could get its testing program off the ground!