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High levels of artery-clogging trans fat in many foods

In the United States , McDonalds was forced to reduce the amount of trans-fatty acids in its French fries. By changing the oil used for the frying, the worst type of fats, so called trans-fatty acids, could be reduced by 48 percent. Trans fat is strongly associated with increased LDL (bad) cholesterol, a major risk factor for coronary heart disease. Trans fat may also lower HDL (good) cholesterol levels. Trans fat forms when vegetable oil is hardened to a solid form through a process called "hydrogenation."

In the United States , new rules require food manufacturers to list the amount of trans fat on all their products from January 1, 2006 . Already, some food labels are listing trans fat on the Nutrition Facts panel. In Japan , consumers do not have access to any such information. Unfortunately, many consumers still believe margarine is healthier than butter. This is not the case.

In Denmark , there are strict rules about reducing trans-fatty acids in food. In March 2003, Denmark became the first country to introduce laws regulating the sale of many processed foods containing trans fat, a move that effectively bans partially hydrogenated oils.

Trans fat in margarine

Japan Offspring Fund is currently investigating a large number of foods sold in Japan , to expose how much trans fat each product contains. The worst product in Japan Offspring Fund's test was Meiji Corn Soft, which contained 12.7% trans fat. This is not acceptable. Another product, Koiwai margarine, contained 1.8% trans fat. If we follow the Danish recommendation that foods should contain less than 2% trans fat, then the Koiwai margarine actually passed the test. In our test, butter contained more than 2% trans fat, but since this is naturally occurring, and not a result of manufacturing or processing, it is not regulated. For a person who wants to avoid butter, the Koiwai margarine is an option.

Japan Offspring Fund presented the results of our tests to three companies that manufacture margarine. The three companies that we had identified as producing foods with high amounts of trans fats were Snow Brand Milk Products Co., Ltd, Unilever Japan and Meiji Milk Products Co., Ltd. We asked what they intend to do in order to improve. Snow Brand replied that they did not think it was necessary to worry about risks associated with trans fats. Unilever Japan replied that Japanese people's energy intake means there is no problem, and they also said they are closely monitoring what is happening internationally regarding regulation. Meiji Milk Products replied that JOF had “recognized an important matter”, but said they could not make any further comment at this stage.

Trans fat in other foods

Japan Offspring Fund also investigated the amount of trans fat in other food products. In our tests, the French Fries sold at McDonalds contained 4,55 gram of trans fat in a 100 gram serving. Other products that contained high amounts of trans fat were the non-dairy coffee whitener products used instead of milk or cream, sold in Japan with the brand name Sajahta and Morinaga. Pastry such as croissants or sugar rolls from bakery companies Yamazaki and Andersen also contained high amounts of trans fats in our tests.

The Japanese Food Safety Commission has stated that Japanese people eat fewer foods that contain trans fatty acids than people in other countries. However, if a Japanese consumer eats normal servings of the foods we have tested, the intake of trans fat could exceed the internationally recognized safe level by at least 3 times.

It is our strong opinion that regulations such as the case in Denmark are needed also in Japan . Research has clearly shown a link between intake of trans fat and heart disease, so a decrease in consumption should be a national priority. For children and especially for people who eat out a lot, there are reasons to be concerned about the lack of guidelines in Japan .

WHO strategy on diet

This has also been pointed out by the World Health Organization in May 2004. The WHO World Health Assembly adopted a global strategy on diet, physical activity and health, which was endorsed by WHO member states (including Japan) at the annual Health Assembly in Geneva . The strategy addresses the risk factors responsible for diseases such as obesity-related conditions, diabetes, cancer and cardiovascular disease. The WHO strategy emphasizes the need to limit the consumption of both saturated fats and trans fatty acids.

The WHO Document, titled "Diet and physical activity: a public health priority" is posted at:

<http://www.who.int/dietphysicalactivity/en/>

Advice: How to avoid trans fatty acids

In order to avoid trans fatty acids that are not indicated on the food label, please pay attention to the following:

- Avoid eating large quantities of margarine, shortening and non-dairy cream (made from plant oil). Also, avoid eating processed foods that contain such sources of trans fat.
- Avoid foods containing plant oil (labeled as plant oil on Japanese food labels) such as custard cream, chocolate, certain types of lacto-ice cream, and other foods with extra-thick cream.
- Do not heat plant oil at high temperature while cooking, as this produces trans fatty acids.

Avoid fried processed foods from department stores and supermarkets. Usually, cheap hydrogenated oils are used to reduce cost. Oxidized oils are dangerous. Also pay attention to old oil, as well as oil that has been exposed to sunlight, and avoid such products carefully, in order to reduce unhealthy trans fat in the diet of your family and your children.

Japan and Korea : Exchange among consumer organizations

By Junichi Kowaka , Japan Offspring Fund

In May and June, 2005, the Asahi Shimbun newspaper has published a series of 15 articles about exchange between Japanese and Korean people. Unfortunately, they have ignored the consumers' issues, while in reality there has been a lot of exchange with Korean organizations. One of the most inspiring people is Ms. Kwang - Mo Chung, a Korean lady who was working as a journalist in the 1970s. She covered important consumer issues in Japan and America , and established the Consumers Union of Korea. This group became the nucleus for spreading consumer awareness all over Korea , to a larger extent than in Japan . The way consumer issues were handled in Japan lacked behind, and there were many examples of injury and damage to consumers because of this. Japan had to learn a lot from Korea in this respect, as there was no one here with such awareness as Ms. Kwang-Mo Chung.

Over the years, Japan Offspring Fund has been fortunate to work closely with Korea . Four videos and four of JOF's bestselling books have been translated to Korean. This could also contribute to consumer awareness in Korea . For example, JOF invited Ms. Kwang-Mo Chung, in 2000, as the Consumer Union of Korea was preparing a book in Korean, adding Korean information to JOF's book, "How to avoid genetically modified foods." At that time, JOF and CUK were working together to analyze the new proposals for GM labeling. Ms. Kwang-Mo Chung is known for stressing the importance of international cooperation between NGOs in different countries. Recently, we have visited Korea a number of times, and for example discussed the problem of dusty air emerging from vacuum cleaners. Another area of common interest is the campaign to reduce smoking in both Japan and Korea .

Photo: Ms. Kwang-Mo Chung discussing consumer issues with JOF's Junichi Kowaka at a meeting in Korea 1998



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Survival: how to manage when a big earthquake hits the Hamaoka nuclear plants

Japan Offspring Fund continues the investigation of nuclear safety. Experts consider that a so-called Tokai mega-seism occurs once in 150 years. The last big Tokai earthquake in the Shizuoka region occurred 151 years ago. Thus, a major disaster is already overdue. When the Hamaoka nuclear reactors collapse due to the Tokai mega-seism, there will be a catastrophe. How can you prepare to protect lives and avoid the terrible effects of nuclear radiation?

The five Hamaoka nuclear reactors were built in Shizuoka prefecture, central Japan , near Omaezaki, a coastal town on the Izu peninsula. Uranium is used as fuel. The amount of uranium at this location is the equivalent of 5000 Hiroshima atomic bombs. In an earthquake, large amounts of radioactive particles will be released into the air. Even if only one reactor should collapse, the effect would be catastrophic. Should several or all five Hamaoka reactors be destroyed, the disaster could be much worse than Chernobyl .

Radioactive clouds

The Chubu Electric Power Co., Ltd insists that their Hamaoka reactors are 100% safe. In our opinion, the effects of an earthquake can never be predicted, so their assessment cannot be trusted. The Tokai mega-seism could be up to 60 times as powerful as the 2004 Niigata earthquake. It is almost impossible to estimate where radioactive dust and debris, containing uranium, would fall as it depends on wind currents and wind speeds, as well as climate conditions. As radioactivity can stay in the atmosphere for long periods of time, it can fall anywhere and seriously pollute any spot on our rotating planet.

The key to avoiding the radioactivity is to not get it on your skin or into your body. Living cells will be attacked by the cancer-causing radioactivity. Therefore, Japan Offspring Fund recommends wearing a face mask to avoid breathing the radioactive air.

In addition, it is crucial to stay out of rain in the aftermath of a Hamaoka nuclear disaster.

Lack of news

When a large earthquake strikes the Hamaoka nuclear reactors, there is no assurance that the public will find out what has happened. Media is usually quick to report about visible effects, such as delayed trains or shaking buildings. But the image of burning nuclear reactors may perhaps not immediately be shown on TV, as it would cause panic. The telephone communication with the region could also be broken, so there would be no way of knowing what has happened.

Transportation would be paralyzed due to the Tokai mega-seism, making it virtually impossible to escape. Getting stuck in the middle of a traffic jam is also a scenario that everyone should consider. This is not the same as just an ordinary earthquake, or, for that matter, just an ordinary nuclear reactor accident. In JOF's newsletter 127 we discussed the difficulties related to a big earthquake affecting the Hamaoka reactors, and especially the risks to people living in Tokyo . We warned that since the Kanto region, including Tokyo , may very well be downwind from the Shizuoka region, a large number of people will all want to escape at once. However, people living in Shizuoka are particularly at risk. In addition to the difficulties of escaping by road, it should also be considered that electricity and water services may be interrupted.

Use a mask

An ordinary cotton face mask is not sufficient to prevent radioactive particles to enter the lungs. Soaking such masks in water makes them a lot more effective, but not to the extent that they would be 100% safe. The best ordinary masks have passed a DS2 level in the national official approval rating system. Such masks cut out more than 95% of dust particles the size of 0.1 microns. For the people living in Shizuoka this would still not be sufficient, so we recommend masks that have passed a DS3 level, cutting out 99.99% of dust particles the size of 0.1 microns. Thinking ahead is important. Make sure to have such masks ready, at home and in your office, as they will be very difficult to buy once the disaster has happened.

Using DS3 level face masks, almost no radioactivity can enter the lungs. There are no DS3 level masks available for children, so we recommend using a DS2 level mask with additional gauze inside. Take care in advance to make sure that your child is breathing comfortably while wearing such mask. DS3 level masks are more expensive, but last considerably longer than DS2 level masks. Also, make sure you stay indoors. Sealing off the doors and windows of the house with duct tape as much as possible is also a good idea. Cleaning and wiping inside the house is also an important way to avoid radioactivity. Use a disposable dust cloth or a towel. Put the cloth in a plastic bag after cleaning, and throw away outside of the house.

Spread the word

Most people do not know about the Hamaoka nuclear reactors, and have not understood the risks associated with a Tokai mega-seism. You should consider yourself a leader in your community, with the responsibility of explaining to others how they can protect themselves. Buying masks for yourself and your family should be a priority. Make sure your dearest ones understand how to use the mask. Discuss this issue with neighbours and colleagues as well. In this way, more people will also become aware of the problem of the nuclear reactors in Hamaoka. Even if you do not consider yourself an “activist”, buying face masks shows that you are serious about this problem and others will also start to demand that these five nuclear reactors are shut down. We recommend the 3M mask.



Emergency goods for earthquake and nuclear safety

The following items should be stocked as emergency goods:

Maps

Seaweed (tororo kelp): decreases the intake of radioactive iodine which causes thyroid cancer – eat large quantities

Duct tape and aluminum foil: use to seal windows and doors to avoid radioactive particles to enter

Face masks (One DS3 mask will last 24 hours. DS2 masks last 12 hours or less)

Shoe covers

Polyester gloves

Raincoat

Towels

Head protection (including hair cover)

Band aid

Plastic bags

Garbage bags

General emergency goods

Radio

Flashlight

Water and food

Emergency medical supplies

Sport shoes

Pen/paper

Bank cards

Postal savings book

Valuables

Kaiten Sushi: how to have fun and eat safely in “sushi bars”

Natural tuna: a luxury

Maguro (tuna) is very popular in Japan . It is often cheap at sushi bars. However, there is a reason why the price can be so low. Actually, tuna is so high in fat. This is due to a special feeding practice, where tuna kept in captivity are fed large amounts of sardines, squid and so on. Over-fishing in the oceans for such feed has become a major environmental problem. Such cheap tuna is not for the connoisseur and should be avoided. According to the Marine Products Agency, imported tuna often contain dioxins and mercury. Such toxins accumulate in the fat. This is another reason why consumers should avoid fattened tuna from fish farms.

For pregnant women, there is still confusion in Japan about what levels are unsafe. The Food Safety Commission has recently decided to take a second look at the recommendations to pregnant women, and stricter guidelines are expected. Until then, everyone should consider eating less tuna, and enjoy the luxury of eating a little bit of natural tuna rather than a lot of cheap stuff.

Codex comes to Japan : Live Internet Radio broadcast

Now we are busy preparing for the Codex Task Force meeting starting Monday, Sept. 19, 2005 in Makuhari , Japan . Since the topic is biotechnology, many people all over the world are very interested in this meeting. We are pleased to announce that we have gotten permission to do a live broadcast over the Internet. This will be a unique opportunity to listen to the important negotiations. Over the next few weeks please check the IACFO blog for updates: <http://iacfo.blogs.com/codex/>

This is the link to the official agenda (PDF):

http://www.codexalimentarius.net/download/report/653/bt05_01e.pdf

The first meeting will likely deal with what items to discuss. Some topics that have been suggested include genetically modified fish and “nutritionally enhanced” GMO crops. Japan Offspring will participate as part of IACFO, the International Association of Consumer Food Organization, which has observer status at Codex.

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Baby pacifiers and teeth problems

Japan Offspring Fund talked about baby pacifiers with Dr. Kameyama

Q: You have made some very serious discoveries at your clinic. Tell us about your findings. At what point are pacifiers clearly a problem?

A: I noticed that children who have used pacifiers have deformed teeth. In my opinion, at 3 years old, the child should never use a pacifier. It is often recommended as a way to get the baby to stop sucking its thumb. However, using a pacifier will damage and deform the teeth. I was surprised to find that pacifiers are also recommended as a way to get the baby to breathe through its nose. This is even written on the piece of paper that comes with the package of the pacifier.

Q: Please give a few examples.

A: Before, I held the view that teeth problems such as misaligned teeth and other deformities are inherited or innate. Thus I never asked parents if the child used a pacifier. Then I discovered that in every case where children had crooked teeth and other deformities, it turned out that they were using pacifiers. I searched for this in the dental literature, but there was nothing written about it at all. So, I started putting information about this on my homepage, so parents would understand what a problem it is.

A: Is there no balanced information at all?

Q: Well, actually I got so angry while I was discovering this problem. An article even appeared in a dental magazine, to promote pacifiers. At that time, I was having so many patients with problems.

A: What happened after that?

Q: The media got interested in the issue, and there were articles in newspapers and even TV programs, discussing the problems connected with pacifiers. Simultaneously, the Tokyo Dental Practitioner's Association started taking the issue seriously. In January 2005, a research committee of pediatrics and child dentistry issued its opinion for the first time concerning pacifiers. They stated clearly that pacifiers are not good for the teeth of the children, and recommended that pacifiers should not be used when the child is more than 1 year old. That was their official statement, and this story was picked up by Yomiuri Shimbun (Japan 's largest newspaper). After that, many parents were voicing their opinion also on the Internet.

Q: How bad is this problem?

A: Many people seem to think that if you stop using the pacifier, the teeth will get better. This is not the case at all. When the pacifier is used up to 1 1/2 years old, there will be damage in about 30% of the cases. When the pacifier is used up to 2 years old, the damage is 60%. When the pacifier is used up to 3 years old, the damage is found in 100% of the children, especially misaligned teeth, deformities and other dental abnormalities. As the teeth emerge from the jaw, they will bend and try to adjust, and the consequences are serious.

Q: It seems we can see pacifiers more often in foreign countries than in Japan . For example, don't you think we often see babies with pacifiers in American movies?

A: Correct. Actually, in 1992, there was a study that linked headaches, fever and diarrhea to the use of pacifiers. The focus in such reports have been on bacterial infections and one study pointed out that in 78% cases, there were infectious bacteria on the pacifiers.

Q: So, in foreign countries, this issue has been known to be a serious problem. Even the New York Times wrote about it in 2002.

A: Yes, and I think it will soon become a major issue also here in Japan .

Q: Do you think a warning would be a good solution, for example to tell parents to please stop letting their babies use pacifiers at the age of 1?

A: Yes. It could also be a good idea to tell parents what will happen if they let the child continue using a pacifier beyond the age of 1. Photographs showing what happens to the

teeth should be published, to explain what the effects will be. Furthermore, there should be liability for the manufacturer of pacifiers. They should be forced to pay the dentist's bill for patients whose teeth have been damaged by pacifiers.

Seriously damaged teeth:

Photo 1: This picture shows how the top and bottom teeth are no longer connected. This patient used pacifiers until 3 years old, and has serious problems biting and chewing food.



Photo 2: This patient's jaw slips sideways. When biting with the front teeth has become impossible, the jaw will compensate by moving sideways, thus bending and contorting the face.



Tuna: recommendations for pregnant women

The Japanese government has issued recommendations regarding the safe intake of maguro (tuna), aimed at pregnant women. Take care and do not eat too much, as there is a risk concerning dimethyl mercury levels.

Japan Offspring Fund wrote about tuna in the August issue of our magazine (number 196). On August 12, the Japanese Health Ministry re-issued its guidelines regarding the safe levels of tuna, considering the risks associated with mercury and the brain development of the embryo and the foetus in the womb.

The government's recommendation states that pregnant women, or women who have a possibility of becoming pregnant, should limit their intake of tuna to less than 80 gram twice a week.

If we consider ordinary sushi or sashimi, one piece is usually about 15 gram, so it would be considered safe to eat up to 5 pieces.

This is the second time the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare issues recommendations for pregnant women. Last time was in 2003, but that warning was criticized because it did not include an assessment or a guideline for tuna.

The Food Safety Commission has established a tolerance of 2 microgram dimethyl mercury per kg body weight per week. It should be noted that fish is considered very healthy food and superb nutrition for all people. Clearly, noone should eat only tuna, but try to eat many various types of fish.

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Chronology of bird flu outbreak in Japan

Japan has seen a large number of cases of avian influenza or bird flu over the past two years. Millions of birds have been culled (emergency slaughtered) in five prefectures in different parts of the country. The virus strain H5N1, a virulent pathogen that is known to be lethal also to humans, has been found in several cases. Quarantine rules have been imposed so that movement was restricted up to 30 km from the farms.

Experts say modern stock raising that involves breeding a large number of domestic animals and fowl in high density has become a risk factor for large-scale outbreaks. The globalization of the marketplace and easy mobility of people and goods have also facilitated the spread of many pathogens.

(Source: K. Inoue, University of Tokyo, Japan : "Highly Pathogenic Avian Flu, Japan " Emerg. Infect. Dis. 2004 Jul) To read the article, please click here.

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/EID/vol11no7/04-0116.htm>

WHO reports that highly pathogenic avian influenza viruses of the H5N1 subtype are circulating in eastern Asia with unprecedented epizootic and epidemic effects. Nine Asian countries reported H5N1 outbreaks in poultry in 2004: Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Malaysia, South Korea, Thailand, and Vietnam. This outbreak of human H5N1 infections is the largest documented since its emergence in humans in 1997.

For WHO updates, please click here.

http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/en/

Chronology (Japan):

2004

January 12

First case in over 79 years discovered in Yamaguchi prefecture.
35,000 birds culled

February 14

The lethal virus strain H5N1 is found in Ooita prefecture.
14 birds culled.

February 28

H5N1 virus found in Kyoto prefecture. 250,000 birds culled.
An additional 15,000 birds culled at a broiler farm.

2005

June 26

H5N2 virus found in Ibaraki prefecture.
25,000 birds culled, eggs destroyed.

August 18

H5N2 virus found in Saitama prefecture.
98,300 birds culled, eggs destroyed.

August 22

Huge outbreak in Ibaraki prefecture.
Totally at 3 farms, 1,352,000 birds culled.
Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries eases the standard
for destroying food products from the farms.

August 25

Continued outbreak in Ibaraki prefecture.
300,000 birds culled.

August 27

Continued outbreak in Ibaraki prefecture (29 farms affected 6/26-9/5).
90,000 birds culled.

Sick School Syndrome

After the debate about dangerous chemicals in personal homes, the attention is now shifting to schools. Classroom air polluted with harmful substances are suspected to be the cause of children's sinus congestion, coughing, sneezing, skin irritation, and even concentration problems, that also are a concern for many teachers and parents.

When government guidelines to combat the sick house syndrome were amended in 2002, Japan 's Education Ministry also decided to require testing of the air in schools at least once a year. Formaldehyde and toluene levels have to be measured, as well as xylene and paradichlorobenzene (PDB). In case the levels exceed certain limits, schools are obliged to install better ventilation and determine how to stop the cause of the pollution. Two other chemicals, styrene and ethyl benzene, were added to the list in 2004.

When the air was tested in two schools in the city of Morioka in Iwate prefecture, it became evident that the problem had been neglected. High levels of pollutants, that exceeded the safety standards could be found in the classrooms. Several children were diagnosed with health problems that could be traced to the presence of the known toxins.

Japan Offspring Fund and a group of concerned teachers interviewed Dr. Masahiko Terasawa, who warns that this is a nation-wide crisis.

Q: Why did people start to pay attention to this problem in Iwate prefecture?

A: We held symposiums in two cities, starting on July 9, 2005. We announced that high levels of formaldehyde had been found in classrooms. The authorities had not alerted parents or even informed the school personnel. There was anger that nothing had been done to reduce the amounts of the chemicals. The testing revealed that 111 classrooms in 50 schools had levels that exceeded the safety limits in Morioka city. In some cases, the levels of formaldehyde were four times or higher than the safety limit. Toluene levels were also very high.

Q: What about health check-ups on the children?

A: That was not done.

Q: Don't you think there were any health problems?

A: Indeed. Since the authorities did not notify the schools or the PTAs, many sick kids

might have appeared without anyone being able to guess the cause. Some classrooms should have been closed and not allowed to be used.

Q: What kind of effect can we expect in the children?

A: It is important to watch out for a number of symptoms, including headaches, nausea or vomiting, sinus congestion and running noses, itchy skin, dizziness, and so on. Another physical symptom is a frequent need to urinate. Mentally, a common symptom is concentration difficulties. As for special classrooms, such as computer rooms, there is a need for considerable ventilation. Unless you pay attention to that, the situation will become terrible, since personal computers contain many toxic chemicals. Also the library can have a bad environment, with so many books containing glues and other volatile toxins.

Q: Can we be sure that the schools are to blame? Couldn't the cause be the poor health of the children in general, or their mental state?

A: You can be sure that a healthy kid, who only feels these symptoms in the classroom, is in fact responding to the sick school syndrome. What concerns me most is that there is no information, and that parents and school personnel are not told about the high levels of air pollutants. Still, if you pay attention to the health condition of the kids, you can start to draw conclusions.

Q: What should be done?

A: Well, we have strict standards about swimming pool water quality. In the same way, people need to understand that strict air quality standards for classrooms are important for kids' health, and that inspections must be carried out.

Q: The problem is also evident when new schools are being built, as in an elementary school in Chofu City in Tokyo , where the children's condition is terrible. Hypersensitivity to chemicals among school children is a real problem, and measures are needed.

A: Yes, the problem is everywhere. Remember that there are many repairs, and that school yards and gardens often are sprayed with insecticides. I can give a number of examples, such as floor wax, high formaldehyde levels in new desks, and pollution from ink in new textbooks. In addition kids are using cosmetics. They are also exposed to other chemicals such as moth balls, that release formaldehyde, from their clothes.

Q: It seems like a terrible waste of tax payers' money to do testing, and not go public with the results, and avoid trying to improve the situation.

A: Yes! For example, in Nagano prefecture, the board of education has published a great manual about sick school syndrome, and what measures need to be taken. Sickness can occur even with exposure levels lower than the current safety limits, so in my opinion, every child should be tested. The results should be published. Then there should be workshops, that gather all stakeholders. The head teachers and principals really must understand the seriousness of this issue, otherwise nothing will improve. To conclude, I would like to add that we should not only be concerned with the kids that are already showing symptoms, but make sure that we take measures to protect all school children from sick school syndrome.

Safety Levels of Chemicals in Air

(Source: The Standard of School Environment Hygiene)

Formaldehyde	Less than 100 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ (0.08ppm)
Toluene	Less than 260 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ (0.07ppm)
Xylene	Less than 870 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ (0.20ppm)
PDB	Less than 240 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ (0.04ppm)
Ethyl Benzene	Less than 3800 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ (0.88ppm)
Styrene	Less than 220 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ (0.05ppm)

Checklist to avoid sick school syndrome

Even if you do not have access to testing equipment, there is a lot you can do to determine if the indoor air is problematic. This checklist from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency can be useful in determining if a proper examination is needed, by a specialist in the field. Check the following sources of indoor air pollutants:

Typical Sources of Indoor Air Pollutants			
Outside Sources	Building Equipment	Component/Furnishings	Other Indoor Sources
<p>Polluted Outdoor Air</p> <p>Pollen, dust, fungal spores; Industrial emissions; and Vehicle emissions</p> <p>Nearby Sources</p> <p>Loading docks; Odors from dumpsters; and Unsanitary debris or building exhausts near outdoor air intakes</p> <p>Underground Sources</p> <p>Radon; Pesticides; and Leakage from underground storage tanks</p>	<p>HVAC Equipment</p> <p>Microbiological growth in drip pans, ductwork, coils, and humidifiers; Improper venting of combustion products; and Dust or debris in ductwork</p> <p>Non-HVAC Equipment</p> <p>Emissions from office equipment (volatile organic compounds, ozone); and Emissions from shops, labs, cleaning processes</p>	<p>Components</p> <p>Microbiological growth on soiled or water-damaged materials; Dry traps that allow the passage of sewer gas; Materials containing volatile organic compounds, inorganic compounds, or damaged asbestos; and Materials that produce particles</p> <p>Furnishings</p> <p>Emissions from new furnishings and floorings; and Microbiological growth on or in soiled or water-damaged furnishings</p>	<p>Science laboratories; Vocational arts areas; Copy/print areas; Food prep areas; Smoking lounges; Cleaning materials; Emissions from trash; Pesticides; Odors and volatile organic compounds from paint, chalk, adhesives; Occupants with communicable diseases; Dry-erase markers and similar pens; Insects and other pests; and, Personal care products.</p>

To read more about EPA's guidelines for indoor air, please click [here](http://www.epa.gov/iaq/schools/tfs/guide01a.html).<http://www.epa.gov/iaq/schools/tfs/guide01a.html>

Environmental problems due to extensive logging

Recent typhoons and landslides due to heavy rain have felled a lot of trees in mountainous areas around Japan . One example is the crisis in Okayama prefecture, central Japan .

The quality of the timber from the logs of fallen trees are now becoming a concern. For people who are considering building a log house, it is important to make sure that the timber does not come from such logs. Wind-fallen trees often have weaknesses, and homes built with such timber will not be earthquake-proof. The JAS standard for wood products will not accept wood from such timber to be used for construction. The only use should be as pulp for paper production.

Experts say Japan has made many mistakes in the past, as the tree planted on mountains were not strong enough to withstand typhoons. Cypress and cedar with weak roots are not suitable for many regions in Japan . Extensive logging in the past has caused environmental problems, that must not be repeated. It is clear that the devastation in Okayama prefecture due to Typhoon 23 in October, 2004 was made worse by human mistakes.



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Introduction and Major Campaign Areas of Japan Offspring Fund

Japan Offspring Fund was established in 1984 as a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO). JOF activities include testing the safety of food and campaigning about safety issues regarding "living", a broad concept based on the Japanese word "kurashi". The Japanese name, "Shokuhin to Kurashi no Anzen Kikin" literally means "Fund for Safe Food and Living".

Major Campaign Areas:

Food Additives	Nuclear Energy
Post Harvest Pesticides	Air/Water/Soil Contamination
International Food Standards (Codex)	Antibiotic Resistance
Genetically Manipulated Organisms and GM Foods	Hormone Disrupting Substances
Electromagnetic Waves	Dioxins
	PCBs

International Activities:

Since 1999, Japan Offspring Fund has participated at the international level at FAO/WHO Codex Alimentarius conferences regarding food safety standards. We have represented consumers also at other international meetings, including the World Trade Organization, OECD and UNEP/CBD. Reporting from such meetings in the monthly magazine is one way to empowering consumers and increasing awareness about the effects of globalization. JOF's international food work is done as a member of IACFO, in cooperation with Center for Science in the Public Interest and The Food Commission. Other work, for example on PCB pollution, has been done together with consumer and environmental organizations in Korea, China, Malaysia, and other Asian countries.

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