

Sky-High Levels of Fracking Chemicals Detected in Children's Bodies

By [Climate Nexus](#)

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While the hazards of [fracking](#) to human health are well-documented, first-of-its-kind research from Environmental Health News shows the actual levels of biomarkers for fracking chemicals in the bodies of children living near fracking wells far higher than in the general population.

The research fills a gap in the science between the [health harms experienced by](#) those [living near fracking](#) and the known harms caused by fracking chemicals: whether fracking chemicals were actually in people's bodies. They are. Of the southwestern [Pennsylvania](#) families who participated in the study, those who lived closer to fracking wells had higher levels of fracking chemicals or their biomarkers than those who lived far away.

One nine-year-old boy had biomarkers for toluene, which can damage the nervous system or kidneys, 91 times higher than the average American. Another had biomarkers for ethylbenzene and styrene, 55 times higher than the average American. Exposure to ethylbenzene and styrene is linked to skin, eye, and respiratory tract irritation, reproductive harm, endocrine disruption, and increased cancer risk. The research is part one of a multi-part series by Environmental Health News exploring the multifaceted “body burden” of fracking.

As reported by [Environmental Health News](#):

In Texas, researchers found that babies born near frequent flaring—the burning off of excess natural gas from fracking wells—are [50 percent](#) more likely to be premature. In Colorado, the state Department of Health [found](#) that people living near fracking sites face elevated risk of nosebleeds, headaches, breathing trouble, and dizziness. In Pennsylvania, researchers found that people living near fracking face [increased rates of infant mortality, depression, and hospitalizations](#) for skin and urinary issues. [Studies of fracking communities](#) throughout the country have found that living near fracking wells increases the risk of premature births, high-risk pregnancies, asthma, migraines, fatigue, nasal and sinus symptoms, skin disorders and [heart failure](#); and laboratory studies have [linked](#) chemicals used in fracking fluid to endocrine disruption—which can cause hormone imbalance, reproductive

harm, early puberty, brain and behavior problems, improper immune function, and cancer.

“We have enough evidence at this point that these health impacts should be of serious concern to policymakers interested in protecting public health,” Irena Gorski Steiner, an environmental epidemiology doctoral candidate at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, told Environmental Health News (EHN).

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Featured image: A boy plays basketball in front of an oil well covered with large colorful flowers and located next to Beverly Hills High School. Wells like this have been hidden throughout Los Angeles. [Faces of Fracking](#) / Flickr

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