

YAHOO! NEWS

Fukushima fallout may be causing illness in American babies: Study

By Mike Krumboltz, Yahoo! News | The Lookout - 14 hrs ago

A new study from the Radiation and Public Health Project found that babies born in the western United States as well as other Pacific countries shortly after the Fukushima nuclear disaster in Japan in March 2011 may be at greater risk for congenital hypothyroidism.

Babies born in places including Hawaii, Alaska, California, Oregon and Washington shortly after Fukushima were 28 percent more likely to suffer from the illness, according to the study, than children born in those same regions one year earlier. The illness, if untreated, can cause permanent handicaps in both the body and brain.



A young man walks through the devastation in Otsuchi, Japan. (Getty Images)

According to the [U.S. National Library of Medicine](#), "If untreated, congenital hypothyroidism can lead to intellectual disability and abnormal growth. In the United States and many other countries, all newborns are tested for congenital hypothyroidism. If treatment begins in the first month after birth, infants usually develop normally."

[MSN's Healthy Living blog explains](#) the Fukushima explosions led to clouds of radioisotope iodine-131 that "floated east over the Pacific Ocean and landed through precipitation on West Coast states as well as other Pacific countries."

In Japan, the health effects associated with Fukushima are obviously much worse. The mortality rate of elderly people who were in retirement facilities near the nuclear plant has [reportedly tripled](#). There has also been reported increases in the number of children with flat feet, thought to be the result of kids playing on radiated soil.

Experts suggest that parents of children born in the western United States or Pacific regions in March or April 2011 get their children checked by a pediatrician for congenital hypothyroidism.

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