

## Talc-Containing Products May Be Carcinogenic Risk

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AN FRANCISCO—A multitude of talc-containing cosmetics, foods, drugs, and other products in everyday use may pose carcinogenic risks to all who are exposed to them, according to Dr. Hector P. Blejer, of the California Department of Public Health.

Many physicians were first alerted to the alarming possibility by a report that talc particles were found in the core of primary cancers of the ovary, endometri-

um, and cervix of a group of women in Great Britain who had had no occupational exposure to either talc or asbestos, a closely related mineral, he told the Western Industrial Health Conference here.

Long before this report, however, it was known that among those who are occupationally involved with either talc or asbestos, there is excess mortality from mesothelial and bronchogenic cancers and possibly gastrointestinal cancers. It was also known that both minerals produce fibrosis of the lungs and other tissues. Among talc workers fibrosis of the lungs is called talcosis, Dr. Blejer noted.

Ordinary environmental exposure to

talc may spread the hazards. A review of recent studies reveals extensive deposition, retention, and absorption of talc in the lungs of individuals who came into contact with it mostly in their own homes. Inhalation and ingestion of talc particles in the home also may be very common, he said.

### Asbestos Present

Talcs are often contaminated by asbestos, and in many cases it is almost impossible to tell the particles apart. Both groups of minerals are hydrous magnesium silicates produced by similar geologic processes. Many talc deposits, therefore, contain asbestos minerals and a great many other impurities.

In commercial and industrial use, talc from these deposits may contain some asbestos. Products having talc contaminated by asbestos are more likely to be hazardous than products containing talc alone, Dr. Blejer continued.

Much is known about the toxic effects of both talc and asbestos. Among the

more serious talc effects, the most bizarre involve drug abuse in which intravenous injection of talc-containing oral tablets and talc-adulterated substances produce pulmonary intravascular granulomas with vascular thrombosis and sclerosis. These conditions lead to pulmonary hypertension, he said.

Carcinoma of the gastrointestinal tract and peritoneal mesothelioma often occur among asbestos workers, Dr. Blejer said.

Many surgeons have spread talc toxicity by inadvertently shedding dusting powder from their surgical rubber gloves. The talc-containing powder that contaminates operated tissues causes intensive mesothelial irritation and fibrosis and adhesion in the pleural and peritoneal cavities.

Talc-Powdered surgical gloves are no longer recommended, but thousands of girls and women use dusting powder after every bath. Those with scars or wounds may be inviting granulomas.

Associated with Dr. Blejer in this study was Robert Arlon, Pharm. D.