

TELEVISION » DOCS & TALKS

HIGHLIGHT » TOXIC TRESPASS

Toronto filmmaker Barri Cohen doesn't have to travel far to find disease clusters in children that are linked to environmental problems. Cohen begins her search after she and her 10-year-old daughter, Ada, volunteer for a chemical body-burden test. The results show Ada has more toxic chemicals in her blood than her mom. These include heavy metals such as lead and mercury, pesticides such as PCBs and DDT and stain-repellent and flame-retardant toxins. There are no known safe levels for these chemicals, and experts agree they are dangerous for children. Yet the federal government isn't doing anything despite a surge in childhood diseases over the past 20 years. Asthma has increased fourfold, one in three children have learning disabilities and 23 per cent of those cases are linked to environmental exposures, and cancer in the young is increasing at 1 per cent a year. Those are scary statistics, but they're not nearly as scary as what Cohen finds when she visits the major



A picture of health? Toxic Tresspass examines how environmental toxins affect the most vulnerable among us.

manufacturing hub of Windsor and the Aamjiwnaang First Nation, in the "Chemical Valley" near Sarnia. There, she visits with parents who have become local environmental activists after seeing the devastating effects of pollution on the young. Their efforts are stymied by bureaucratic hedging and bullying by big business. By looking at how environmental toxins affect the most vulnerable

among us, Cohen exposes not only how children have become "lab rats in a vast uncontrolled experiment," but how unwilling the government has been to respond to the crisis. Postscripts reveal federal agencies have been forced into action by the grassroots activism shown here.

» *The View from Here*,
TVO, Wednesday at 10 p.m.

» *Henrietta Walmark*