Common cleaning products disrupt pregnancy in mice. Do humans face same danger?

Mice exposed to disinfectants in commercial-grade cleaning products took longer to get pregnant, had fewer pups and suffered more miscarriages and distressed fetuses, researchers reported today.

The little-known chemicals, called quaternary ammonium compounds, or quats, are common ingredients of cleaners used by hospitals, restaurants and food processing plants. Quats also are found in some shampoos, disinfectant wipes and nasal sprays.

The chemicals have been in widespread use for decades. But the new study is the first to look at the reproductive toxicity of newer quat combinations found in cleaning products, according to the researchers from Virginia Tech and Washington State University.

“It’s impossible to say what exposure at these levels means for humans,” said study coauthor Pat Hunt, a geneticist at the Washington State University. “There’s been so little research on these compounds that we don’t have a good handle on how we’re even exposed.”

Pregnant women and developing fetuses can be particularly vulnerable to such exposures. “It underscores once again that exposures to certain chemicals during pregnancy can have detrimental effects,” said Dr. Linda Giudice, a reproductive endocrinologist at the University of California, San Francisco who was not involved in the study.

Read the full, original story: Disinfectant causes reproductive problems in mice