



Pesticide Education Center

Consumer Pesticide Safety Series

1 Home Use

(Revised August 2002)

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What are the Most Hazardous Household Pesticides?

- ◆ The most dangerous products are foggers, bombs, and aerosols. We recommend that you never buy or use them, or allow an exterminator to use them inside or outside your home.
- ◆ Foggers, bombs, and aerosols give off vapors, mists, and tiny particles that are easy to absorb into the body. They contaminate the entire treated area.
- ◆ Children in contact with contaminated carpet, toys, furniture, etc. get the pesticides in their body through the skin (the most common way), by breathing them in, and swallowing them. The residues can remain in the home for weeks, months, or even years.

What Are the Long Term Health Risks from Pesticides?

- ◆ Studies link pesticide exposure to cancer, birth defects, stillbirth, infertility, and damage to the brain and nervous system (including Parkinson's disease).
- ◆ Cancers seen in children include: brain cancer, leukemia, non-Hodgkin lymphoma, and soft tissue sarcoma. The same cancers are found in adults, as well as multiple myeloma, cancer of the pancreas, breast, prostate, kidney/bladder, eye, and colon-rectal cancer.
- ◆ Pesticides can aggravate asthma, allergies, and multiple chemical sensitivity.

Why Are Children More Vulnerable to Pesticides?

- ◆ Children are not mini-adults. They have much more skin surface for their size and take in more breaths per minute than adults. At the same level of exposure, they will absorb more into their bodies.. Children also have less mature defense systems against toxic chemicals.
- ◆ Recent studies show unacceptable levels of exposure to infants and children from pesticide use in the home, on pets, on lawns and in gardens — even when used legally and following the instructions on the label.
- ◆ Children are much more likely to have direct contact with residues on contaminated surfaces such as carpets, pets, lawns, furniture etc. They are much more likely to be wearing less clothing, be barefoot, fall down, and put things in their mouths. Studies show that toys that were not in the room at the time when pesticides were applied, are contaminated from residues that remain in the room.

Does Neighbors' Pesticide Use Affect Me and My Family?

- ◆ Residues from outdoor pesticide sprays can travel far from the site where they are applied. This is called "drift". 85 to 90% of sprays can drift away from where they were originally applied. How far they drift depends on wind and other factors, but it can be a mile or more.

- ◆ Pesticide drift residues contaminate play equipment, sand boxes, home gardens, backyard pools and ponds, rivers, lakes, and streams. Pesticide drift from run-off, leaching and rain is a hazard to birds, bees, fish, and other wildlife, and to pets.
- ◆ Pesticides used outdoors can get inside a home even if the windows are closed; and are tracked in from contaminated soil. Pesticide residues, once inside the home, can remain for weeks, months or even years.
- ◆ Pesticide drift poses health risks to neighbors and the community. Most at risk are children, pregnant women, asthmatics, people with allergies and chemical sensitivity, the elderly, and the ill.

What Pesticides Should I Choose?

- ◆ Use pesticide baits and traps. Baits do not make the entire treated area toxic. The pesticide stays in the original container, leaving with the pest when it takes it back to the colony or nest, making their home toxic, not yours. Baits do not give off harmful vapors, mists, or particles.
- ◆ Avoid using foggers, bombs, and aerosols.
- ◆ Avoid using liquid sprays indoors. Outdoor use can cause widespread contamination from drift.

What are Safer Alternatives to Commonly Used Pesticides?

- ◆ **Common Insecticides:** Dursban (chlorpyrifos) and diazinon – are now banned by the EPA for direct sale to consumers. Others include: malathion, Orthene (acephate), Sevin (carbaryl), propoxur, cyfluthrin, permethrin, resmethrin, kelthane (dicofol), and thiodan (endosulfan). **Safer Alternatives:** Baits and traps, boric acid (borates), insecticidal soaps, diatomaceous earth (NOT swimming pool type), B.T., beneficial nematodes, neem, vacuuming, new bait methods for subterranean termites.
- ◆ **Common Herbicides:** Roundup (glyphosate), 2,4-D, MCPA, dicamba, trichlopyr, atrazine, and diuron. **Safer Alternatives:** corn gluten, hot water, vinegar, hand pulling, weed wackers, proper watering and mowing, and organic lawn care.
- ◆ **Common Fungicides:** Daconil (chlorothalonil), benomyl, maneb, Dyrene, PCNB, Bayleton. **Safer Alternatives:** sulfur, baking soda, some copper compounds, cultural controls, organic lawn/garden care
- ◆ **Common Fumigants:** Vikane/sulfuryl fluoride termite tenting. Pest strips with dichlorvos. Paradichlorobenzene (mothballs), also used in toilet bowl deodorizers and air fresheners. **Safer alternatives:** There is a nontoxic heat method for drywood termites. If Vikane must be used, double the time of return if you are chemically sensitive or have asthma. Cedar and lavender controls moths. Many deodorizers and air fresheners do not contain para-dichlorobenzene; they may emit chemicals (especially plugs-ins), harmful to those with asthma, allergies, or chemical sensitivity.
- ◆ **Lice Shampoos:** Most over-the-counter and prescription products are not safe for children or pregnant women. **Safer Alternatives:** There are safe nontoxic shampoos such as “LiceBGone” that are very effective. Contact us if not available in your area.
- ◆ **Pet Products:** Most flea control products contain toxic pesticides – including fipronil/ Frontline, imidacloprid/Advantage, and lufenuron/ Program. **Safer Alternatives:** Enzyme shampoos such as “LiceBGone” control fleas on dogs and cats. A 50-50 mixture of white vinegar and water sprayed daily on the pet (avoid eyes) keeps fleas in check, along with thorough and frequent vacuuming and weekly washing of pet bedding in hot soapy water.

What About Pest Control Companies?

- ◆ Find a company that uses natural or organic methods and avoids toxic pesticides. Do not be fooled by some companies that say they use “IPM” (Integrated Pest Management), but also use toxic pesticides. Make sure you know exactly what they plan to do.
- ◆ Do not sign a contract to have pesticides applied on a schedule, or on a regular basis to your home or lawn. This results in unnecessary applications and expense, and keeps your home toxic.
- ◆ Make sure you have a written contract before any work begins on your property. The contract should have complete information on exactly what pests are being treated, the methods of application, and the names and ingredients in ALL products that will be used.
- ◆ If you do not know what the product is, or what the potential risks are – don’t allow its use on your property.
- ◆ Most pest control operators know little or nothing about delayed health effects of the products they use. Many do not know the effects on children and adults with asthma, allergies, chemical sensitivity, and underlying health problems. Please let us know if you find a pest control operator who knows about pesticide’s potential to cause long-term effects and shares this information with you.

Why Would Pesticides Be On the Market If They Are Not Safe?

- ◆ Like alcohol and tobacco, pesticides are legal toxic products. Because they are legal does not mean they are safe.
- ◆ Many people assume that the pesticides they buy, or those used by exterminators and lawn care companies are “safe”. They assume that the pesticides wouldn’t be on the market if they weren’t, and that the government is protecting them. Neither assumption is correct.
- ◆ The consumer has no way of knowing about long-term (chronic) effects of pesticides, including cancer, birth defects, infertility, genetic and brain damage in laboratory animals. The law does not require this information to be on the label.
- ◆ Pesticides contain other ingredients that can be more harmful than the pesticide itself, or increase the damage it can do. These so called “inert” ingredients are not on the pesticide label because the law does not require it. Nor does the law require that they be tested for potential harm to human health, wildlife or the environment.
- ◆ Do not be misled by companies who tell you they only use pesticides registered by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). All legal pesticides are registered by the EPA. It is against the law to advertise or market pesticides as “safe” since their purpose is to kill or harm living things.
- ◆ Just because a pesticide does not make you ill immediately, does not mean that unacceptable exposures are not occurring that may cause delayed effects. The most vulnerable are children, pregnant women, the elderly, asthmatics, and those with weakened immune systems.

For more information about pesticides, see the book by Dr. Marion Moses *“Designer Poisons: How to Protect Your Health and Home from Toxic Pesticides”*.

How To Order Designer Poisons

\$22.50 book rate \$24.50 priority mail

CALIFORNIANS ADD \$1.50 SALES TAX.

Send check or money order made out to Pesticide Education Center to:

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