



## **CoSCEP**

# **Coalition to Stop Children's Exposure to Pesticides**

*A Project of the Pesticide Education Center, San Francisco, California*

Consumer Pesticide Safety Series

## **# 1 Home Use**

### **What are the Most Hazardous Household Pesticides?**

- ✧ The most dangerous products are foggers, bombs, and aerosols. They give off vapors, mists, and tiny particles that contaminate the entire treated area and are more easily absorbed into the body. Residues can remain in the home for weeks, months, even years. We recommend that you never buy or use them, or allow an exterminator to use them inside or outside your home.

### **What Are the Health Risks of Pesticides?**

- ✧ Studies link pesticide exposure to cancer, birth defects, stillbirth, infertility, and damage to the brain and nervous system – including Parkinson's disease.
- ✧ The types of cancers in adults include leukemia, lymphoma, brain cancer, multiple myeloma, and cancer of the pancreas, prostate, and colon. Cancers in children include: brain cancer, leukemia, non-Hodgkin lymphoma, and soft tissue sarcoma.
- ✧ Pesticide exposure can aggravate asthma, allergies, chemical sensitivity, and other medical conditions.
- ✧ Just because a pesticide does not make you ill immediately, does not mean that potentially harmful exposures are not occurring that may cause delayed effects later in life.

### **Why Are Children More Vulnerable to Pesticides?**

- ✧ Children are not mini-adults. They have more skin surface for their size and take in more breaths per minute than adults, so absorb more into their bodies. Their ability to breakdown toxic chemicals is less mature, and their immune system is not fully developed.
- ✧ Legal pesticide use according to label instructions can result in unacceptable exposure to the fetus, and to infants and children.
- ✧ Infants and children are more likely to have direct contact with residues on contaminated surfaces such as carpets and lawns and from pets. They often wear less clothing, are barefoot, fall down, and put everything things in their mouth. Pesticides enter even more easily through their skin if it is wet from drooling, urine, or other liquids.
- ✧ Toys and other objects which are not in the room at the time when pesticides are applied and are brought in later, can become contaminated. Residues that remain in the room can re-volatilize and re-deposit over days or weeks.

### **Why Are Pesticides On the Market If They Are Not Safe?**

- ✧ Pesticides are legal toxic products. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) does not allow pesticides to be advertised or labeled as "safe". Companies have been prosecuted and fined for calling pesticides "Safe".
- ✧ The consumer has no way of knowing about long-term effects of pesticides, including cancer, birth defects, infertility, genetic and brain damage in laboratory animals. The law does not require this 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.

### **How Does Neighborhood Use Affect Me and My Family?**

- ✧ Residues from outdoor pesticide sprays can travel far from the site of application – as much as 85 to 90% can drift off target. How far they drift depends on wind, and other factors, but can be a mile or more.
- ✧ Pesticides used outdoors can get inside the home even if the windows are closed. They are also tracked in from treated lawns, and once inside the home, can remain for weeks, months or even years.
- ✧ 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 to pets.

### What Are Safer Alternatives?

- ❖ **Insecticides:** Use baits and traps whenever possible. Baits do not make the entire treated area toxic – the pesticide stays in the original container, and is taken by the pest back to the colony or nest, making their home toxic, not yours. Baits do not give off harmful vapors, mists, or particles.  
Avoid using pest strips (containing DDVP/dichlorvos), and moth products containing paradichlorobenzene or naphthalene. Cedar and lavender controls moths. Many air fresheners and deodorizers contain paradichlorobenzene (not on the label).  
Avoid the use of plugs-ins, which can emit chemicals harmful to those with asthma, allergies, and chemical sensitivity.
- ❖ **Herbicides:** Alternatives include corn gluten, hot water, vinegar, weed wackers, proper watering and mowing, organic lawn care.
- ❖ **Fungicides:** Alternatives include sulfur, baking soda, some copper compounds, cultural controls, organic lawn/garden care.

### What About Termite Control?

- ❖ There is a nontoxic heat method for drywood termites. If Vikane (sulfuryl fluoride) must be used, double the time of return, especially if a household member is chemically sensitive or has asthma, or other health problems. Air out with cross-ventilation for 24 hours before returning.
- ❖ Leather (real not synthetic) can hold on to gases longer. Clothing, shoes, etc. of real leather should be removed prior to fumigation or placed in gas impermeable bags. Leather furniture should be removed if possible, or if not possible to remove, allowed to off-gas longer – outdoors if possible.
- ❖ There are several good baiting systems for subterranean termites. You may be able to do this yourself for a minor or small infestation. Professional help should be used for large or severe infestations.

### What About Pest Control Companies?

- ❖ Do not sign a contract to have pesticides applied on a schedule, or on a regular basis. This results in unnecessary applications and expense, and maintains continuing levels of toxics in and around your home.
- ❖ Find a company that uses natural or organic methods and avoids use of the most toxic pesticides. Do not be fooled by companies that say they use “IPM” (Integrated Pest Management), but also use toxic pesticides.
- ❖ Do not be misled by companies who tell you they only use pesticides registered by the EPA. **ALL** legal pesticides are registered by the EPA.
- ❖ Make sure you have a written contract before any work begins on your property. The contract should have complete information on what pests are being treated, the methods of application, and the names and ingredients in ALL products.
- ❖ If you do not know what the product is, or what the potential risks are – do not 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.

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**Pesticide Education Center:** P.O. Box 225279, San Francisco, CA 94122. 415-665-4722 email: pec@igc.org  
www.pesticides.org. *Designer Poisons, How to Protect Your Health and Home from Toxic Pesticides* by Dr. Marion Moses is available for \$15.00 prepaid from the center.

### Local Contact Information:

**ManaSota-88:** P.O. Box 1728, Nokomis, FL 34274. Telephone 941-966-6256 Fax 941-966-0659  
email: nfo@manasota88.org Website: www.manasota88.org

**CoSCEP:** P.O. Box 15853 Sarasota, FL 34277. Telephone 941-954-2291, Fax 941-954-0004