

Avoiding Big Risks for Small Kids

Five Questions for Kid-Safe Pest Control in Child Care

Did you know that toxic pesticides are used in most North Carolina child care facilities? They're used to get rid of pests like cockroaches, ants or weeds, but they can be harmful for children's health, even when used correctly.

Pests are bad news for child care, but spraying toxic pesticides is *NOT* necessary! A safer and more cost-effective option for child care is known as IPM (short for "Integrated Pest Management"). It is healthier for kids, the adults who care for them, and the environment they'll inherit.



Five questions parents should be asking about pest control in child care:

1. Are pesticides ever used while kids are here?

*Answer should be: **No way José!** Spraying while kids are around – even if they are in a different room or outside – can dramatically raise the risk of poisoning.*

2. Are baseboard spraying or fogging ever used here?

*Answer should be: **No way José!** Both ways of using pesticides are very risky, and are never really necessary for run-of-the-mill pest problems.*

- ▶ "Baseboard spraying" usually uses a pump sprayer, and pesticides are squirted onto the baseboards around the perimeter of a room. After they dry, the chemicals can off-gas into the room for days, or even weeks. There is also a high risk that kids will touch the sprayed surfaces while they play on the floor.
- ▶ "Fogging" or "bombing" usually uses a high-pressure canister of pesticides that is "set off" in the middle of a room, and fills up the whole room with pesticide gas. This is a very high-volume, high-risk practice that coats every surface in the room with chemicals, where they can easily be inhaled or picked up on people's skin.

3. Do you use least-toxic IPM (Integrated Pest Management)?

*Answer should be: **Yes indeed!** IPM is a least-toxic approach to pest control that is the "state of the art" for child care, school, or any environment where kids spend time. It drastically reduces both pests and pesticides using a combination of smart pest prevention, and targeted, low-risk options for pest control.*

4. Do you have a pest control policy or contract that calls for IPM?

*Answer should be: **Yes indeed!** It's important to put IPM down in writing, especially when there's a third-party contractor involved in pest control, which is very common.*

5. Do you have records of pest control activities I can see?

*Answer should be: **Yes indeed!** A provider who keeps good records is probably more conscious about pest control at their facility. What's more, those records could be helpful to your doctor in case your child ever became sick after a pest control treatment.*

Survey shows high-risk pest control in NC child care

In Summer of 2008, Toxic Free NC surveyed 89 child care providers from all across North Carolina about pest control in their facilities. More than half of child care providers who took the survey said that broadcast pesticide sprays – baseboard spraying or fogging – are used in their facilities.

These broadcast pesticide applications carry a significant risk that children or staff will be exposed to pesticides by inhaling, ingesting or absorbing them through their skin. Pesticide exposure has been connected with many health risks for children including asthma attacks, learning difficulties, and some forms of cancer – even when they're used correctly.

Like public school, NC child care needs safe, effective pest control

Thanks to a law adopted in 2006 – the NC School Children's Health Act – public schools in North Carolina are switching to kid-safe IPM (short for "integrated pest management") programs that dramatically reduce the risks to children from pests and pesticides. Most school systems that use it report that over time, IPM works better and costs less – sometimes just a fraction of the cost of conventional spray programs!

IPM is common sense pest management that relies on smart pest prevention, and uses pesticides sparingly if at all. It is recommended by Toxic Free NC and the US Environmental Protection Agency for child care facilities, schools and other spaces occupied by children, because it reduces or eliminates the risk of harm to children from pesticides. IPM uses pro-active monitoring, sanitation, and maintenance to prevent pest problems before they start, and uses least-toxic pesticides sparingly if at all.

About one-quarter of child care providers who took Toxic Free NC's survey in 2008 said that only least-toxic pest control methods are used in their facility. That group of centers was less likely to report having serious ongoing pest problems!



Get the Report

There are two ways to get a free copy of the complete report on findings from Toxic Free NC's 2008 NC Child Care Pest Control Survey - ***Avoiding Big Risks for Small Kids***.

- 1) Download a copy from ToxicFreeNC.org.
- 2) Request a copy be mailed to you by calling 919-833-1123.

We're here to help!

For more information on kid-safe pest management for child care, including sample contracts, fact sheets, training resources and more, please contact Toxic Free NC at 1-877-NO-SPRAY, or visit our website – ToxicFreeNC.org.

