

# Kids and Pesticides

A Fact Sheet from the Agricultural Resources Center

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## Kids and pesticides don't mix!

Kids are different from adults in many ways, which means that every day children are exposed to more toxic pollutants than adults because:



- Pound for pound, kids breathe more, drink more, and eat more than adults, so they take in more toxics like pesticides that pollute their air, water, and food;
- Babies and small children also take in toxics when playing close to the ground or putting things in their mouths;
- For years after birth, children's bodily systems are still developing, so it is more difficult for their bodies to process and break down toxins; and
- From birth through the teen years, all the major body systems go through "growth spurts." During these critical periods of growth, exposure to toxic chemicals like pesticides can result in serious problems with health and development.

## Pesticides can harm health

- Pesticides can trigger asthma attacks and aggravate allergies and other respiratory problems (1).
- Pesticides may increase risk of infertility, stillbirth, mental and emotional problems, certain types of cancer, and birth defects (2,3).
- Children in areas where pesticide use is common have been shown to suffer from neurological problems such as poor hand-eye coordination, lack of stamina, and difficulty concentrating, compared to children from areas where pesticides are not used (4).

There is a great deal of scientific uncertainty about how much exposure to toxic chemicals is too much. But recent studies have shown us that our kids do have toxic chemicals in their bodies, not just pesticides but also lead, mercury, and other pollutants. For the health of our children, prevention is the best medicine. Removing toxic chemicals like pesticides from our homes and schools prevents exposure, and prevents harm.

## Our decisions affect their environment

Children do not have a political voice. They can't vote, and they can't usually go to council meetings and speak for themselves. It is up to the adults who care about them to make responsible decisions about what goes into a child's environment. It is also up to us to change things when unhealthy decisions are being made for our kids.

**Agricultural Resources Center & Pesticide Education Project**

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[www.PESTed.org](http://www.PESTed.org)

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## Resources for more information

### Current Scientific Information on Environmental Health Issues

Environmental Health News  
[www.environmentalhealthnews.org](http://www.environmentalhealthnews.org)

Collaborative on Health & Environment  
[www.protectingourhealth.org](http://www.protectingourhealth.org)

Rachel's Environmental Health Weekly  
[www.Rachel.org](http://www.Rachel.org)

National Center for Environmental Health  
Centers for Disease Control  
[www.cdc.gov/nceh](http://www.cdc.gov/nceh)

### Safer Pest Management for Schools

IPM Institute of North America  
[www.ipminstitute.org](http://www.ipminstitute.org)  
Madison, WI (608) 232-1528

Green Flag Program  
[www.greenflagschools.org](http://www.greenflagschools.org)

US Environmental Protection Agency  
[www.epa.gov/pesticides/ipm/index.htm](http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/ipm/index.htm)

### Kids' Environmental Health Organizations

North Carolina State Asthma Program  
<http://wch.dhhs.state.nc.us/Asthma/AANC.htm>

Center for Health, Environment & Justice  
[www.chej.org](http://www.chej.org)  
Falls Church, VA (703) 237-2249

Kids for Saving Earth  
[www.kidsforsavingearth.org](http://www.kidsforsavingearth.org)  
Plymouth, MN (763) 559-1234

### Resources for Alternatives to Pesticides

Beyond Pesticides  
[www.beyondpesticides.org](http://www.beyondpesticides.org)  
Washington, DC (202) 543-5450

Bio-Integral Resource Center  
[www.birc.org](http://www.birc.org)  
Berkeley, CA (510) 524-256

### Citations from page one

1. Salam, MT, Li, Y, Langholz, B, & Gilliland, FD (2004). "Early-Life Environmental Risk Factors for Asthma: Findings from the Children's Health Study." *Environmental Health Perspectives* 112:760-765.
2. Schreinemachers, 2003. "Birth Malformations and Other Adverse Perinatal Outcomes in Four U.S. Wheat-Producing States." *Environmental Health Perspectives* 111:1259-1264.
3. Reynolds, P., Von Behren, J, Gunier, RB, Goldberg, DE, Harnly, M, Hertz, A (2005). "Agricultural Pesticide Use and Childhood Cancer in California." *Epidemiology* 16:93-100.
4. Guillette, 1998. "An Anthropological Approach to the Evaluation of Preschool Children Exposed to Pesticides in Mexico." *Environmental Health Perspectives* 106(6): 347-353.

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