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Lawn Pesticides and Our Health

Scientific studies indicate that many pesticides are linked with numerous health problems. According to Beyond Pesticides, a Washington D.C. based advocacy group, of the 30 commonly used lawn pesticides, 19 are probable or possible **carcinogens**, 13 are linked with **birth defects**, 21 with **reproductive effects**, 20 with **liver or kidney damage**, 15 with **neurotoxicity** or **abnormal brain development**, and 28 are **sensitizers or irritants**.¹

Unfortunately, **pesticides do not stay on the lawns to which they are applied**. Instead, they wash away with runoff, travel with us on the soles of our shoes, and cling to our pets' fur and feet.

Eventually, pesticides end up in our water, air, food, and bodies.

Children are Particularly Vulnerable



Due to their rapid growth and still-developing organs, pesticides can affect children more seriously than adults.² ³ Studies have linked some lawn pesticides to hyperactivity, developmental delays, behavioral disorders, and motor dysfunction.^{4, 5, 6}

A study in the Journal of the National Cancer Institute found that home and garden use of pesticides can **increase the risk of childhood leukemia by almost seven times**.⁷

Current Safety Testing is Inadequate

- **Lawn pesticides are not tested for long term toxicity** unless they are also used on food crops.
- Lawn pesticides are **not tested in the combinations and formulations in which they are actually used**. Yet, these combinations and formulations can be more toxic than the pure active ingredient.
- There is **no testing of the toxicity of the breakdown products** of these chemicals or their persistence in the environment.

Solutions Exist

There are safe, effective, affordable alternatives to using toxic lawn pesticides. A number of towns in Connecticut have successfully switched to pesticide-free organic lawn care.^{8, 9}

What You Can Do

- 1) **Spread the word!** Join the Coalition for a Safe & Healthy Connecticut, a growing alliance of citizens, scientists, health professionals, workers, and educators seeking preventive action on toxic hazards.
www.safehealthyct.org
- 2) **Write a letter** to you local officials asking them to promote safe, organic lawn care on all public property and school grounds.
- 3) **Start or support a local campaign** to ban pesticides on public land or encourage citizens to transition to organic lawn care. We have current campaigns in **Berlin, Bridgeport, East Hampton, Essex, Hartford, Middlefield, and Portland**.

For Materials and Information

Please contact Sarah Uhl at 860-232-6232, or suhl@cleanwater.org



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References

- ¹ <http://www.beyondpesticides.org/lawn/factsheets/30health.pdf>
- ² National Research Council, National Academy of Sciences. 1993. Pesticides in the Diets of Infants and Children, National Academy Press, Washington, DC: 184-185.
- ³ US EPA, Office of the Administrator, Environmental Health Threats to Children, EPA 175-F-96-001, September 1996. See also: <http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/food/pest.htm>.
- ⁴ National Research Council. 2000. Scientific frontiers in developmental toxicology and risk assessment. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.
- ⁵ Physicians for Social Responsibility, The National Environmental Trust, and The Learning Disabilities Association of America. 2000. Polluting our future: Chemical pollution in the U.S. that affects child development and learning. http://www.net.org/health/tri_report.pdf (accessed 6/2/05).
- ⁶ Cox C. 2004. Journal Of Pesticide Reform. Vol. 24 (4) citing: Garry, V.F. et al. 2002. "Birth defects, season of conception, and sex of children born to pesticide applicators living in the Red River Valley of Minnesota." Environ. Health Persp. 110 (Suppl. 3):441-449.
- ⁷ Lowengart, R. et al. 1987. "Childhood Leukemia and Parent's Occupational and Home Exposures," Journal of the National Cancer Institute 79:39.
- ⁸ See the Northeast Organic Farming Association Connecticut Chapter's information on organic land care. <http://www.ctnofa.org/OrganicLandCare/OLC.htm>
- ⁹ Managing Healthy Sports Fields: A Guide to Using Organic Materials for Low-Maintenance and Chemical-Free Playing Fields by Paul D. Sachs, January 2004