



Pesticides

Everyday, we eat, drink, breathe, and touch chemicals that exist around us. The chemicals can affect our health. Planned Parenthood **GREEN CHOICES** will give you the information you need to make choices for better health and a greener environment — for yourself, your family, and your community.

What are pesticides?

- Pesticides are used to kill pests, including bugs, rodents, and weeds. They are made with thousands of different chemicals. They are used in many forms, including sprays, baits, crystals, gasses, liquids, pellets, and powders.
- All pesticides are harmful to people.
- The government keeps watch over how pesticides are used. But we all still come in contact with many that can cause health risks.

How would I have contact with pesticides?

- **Most of us have contact with at least some pesticides.** They are everywhere. They can be in all kinds of buildings — homes, schools, markets — and in all kinds of outdoor settings — parks, pastures, woodlands, golf courses. They can be
 - on the fruits, vegetables, grains, and meat you eat
 - in the air you breathe
 - in the water you drink and bathe in
 - in the dust on your skin
- **Workers at highest risk of having contact with pesticides are**
 - exterminators
 - farmers and other agricultural workers
 - gardeners
 - landscapers
 - livestock breeders

What are the risks of contact with pesticides?

- Pesticides can disrupt hormones or cause cancer and other health problems.
- They can increase a child's risk of having birth defects and learning disabilities.
- It depends on
 - how harmful the pesticide is
 - how you come in contact with it — through your skin, breathing it in, or eating it
 - how long you are in contact with it
 - your age — fetuses and very young children are at the highest risk of harm
 - your genes (family history)
 - other pesticides and chemicals with which you've had contact

How can I avoid contact with pesticides?

- **Buy organic** food when you can. Farmers markets may charge less than grocery stores.
- **Wash, scrub, and peel** produce before you cook or eat it.
- **Don't spray pesticides** indoors, in the garden, or on pets. Keep pests out of your home by sealing cracks and holes around doors, windows, and baseboards. Keep food in sealed containers.
- If you work with pesticides, **change out of your work clothes and shoes** before you go into your home. And be sure to **wash your hands** frequently and **shower** before you are near others.
- **Use baits and traps** instead of pesticide sprays, powders, or strips. Go to: www.pesticide.org/factsheets.html#alternatives
- Brush children's hair with a metal lice comb to **stop the spread of lice** instead of using chemicals. www.epa.gov/pesticides/ipm/schoolipm/chap-11.pdf

Where can I get more information about pesticide exposure?

- **Beyond Pesticides:** <http://www.beyondpesticides.org/>
 - **National Pesticide Information Center:** npic.orst.edu/tech.htm or 1-800-858-7378
 - **U.S. Department of Labor Occupational Safety and Health Administration:** www.osha.gov
 - **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency — Office of Pesticides:** www.epa.gov/pesticides
- In an emergency, call the National Poison Control Hotline at 1-800-222-1222.

Green Choices information is also online: www.plannedparenthood.org/greenchoices