

Help Yourself to a Healthy Home

Pesticides

Should you be Concerned?

Many families are bugged by pests. Cockroaches, flies, rats, and mice carry disease and can get into food. Roaches and house dust mites can make allergies and asthma worse. Fleas and ticks riding into the home on pets or clothing can carry disease. The bites of rats and certain spiders can make children and others very ill.

FACT:

Almost one-half of homes with a child under five have pesticides stored within reach of children.

Pesticides are things like bug spray, pet flea collars, rat poison, and garden weed killer that can prevent and kill pests. Pesticides can pose a real danger if you do not use them in the right way. Some may cause poisoning, birth defects, nerve damage, and even cancer. They can make allergies or asthma worse. Breathing fumes or dust from pesticide powders and sprays can be harmful. Touching a floor where pesticide was used can also be dangerous.

Children are especially at risk. When they crawl and play on floors and lawns, they can come into contact with any pesticides used there. Young children put their hands, toys, and other things in their mouths. They may have touched pesticides on the floor or grass.

The biggest danger is poisoning. Children can accidentally poison themselves if they play with, eat, or drink pesticides that are not stored safely.

IN CASE OF EMERGENCY

You can reach your local Poison Control Center by calling 1-800-222-1222 from anywhere in the country. Put this number next to all of your telephones and where you store your hazardous products.

Questions to Ask

Why Do You Have Pests?

- Does your home have loose or torn screens or broken windows?
- Are there gaps or holes in the building that could let in pests?
- Are counters and floors sometimes dirty? Do dishes go unwashed?
- Is there spilled food anywhere in your home?
- Do you keep your garbage where ants, roaches, rats, mice, or other animals can get into it?
- Does your plumbing or roof leak?
- Do you store food in containers or boxes that don't have covers?

Do You Use Pesticides Properly?

Never take it for granted that a pesticide is harmless.

- Do you (or a pest control company) ever use airborne pesticides like flea bombs or roach sprays indoors instead of baits? Bombs and sprays spread pesticides over a larger area, making it more likely someone will come into contact with them.
- Do you use flea collars, sprays, or powder on your pets? These contain pesticides that may harm people.
- Do you use pesticides without reading the label?
- Are children or pets in the room when you use pesticides?
- Do you eat, drink, or smoke while using a pesticide?
- Do you use care when you put bug repellent on your children?
- Do you serve fruits and vegetables without washing them well?

How Do You Store and Dispose of Pesticides?

- Do you ever store pesticides in containers other than the package they came in?
- Do you sometimes have extra, leftover pesticides around the home?
- Do you store pesticides where children can reach them?
- Do you keep pesticides near food?
- Do you throw empty pesticide containers away without rinsing them?
- Do you leave empty pesticide containers where children can reach them?

Action Steps

Keep a Clean Home

- Wash children's hands, bottles, pacifiers, and toys often. Regularly clean floors, windowsills, and other surfaces.
- Keep a tight lid on trashcans and empty them often.
- Store food in tightly sealed containers.
- Make sure people in your home eat at the table. Don't let them walk around with food.
- Wipe up spills and crumbs right away.
- Clean up dirty dishes right after eating.
- Clean your home well after treating for roaches to reduce roach allergies.
- Pests need water. Keep them from getting it by fixing leaks and not leaving dishwater in the sink overnight.
- Control fleas by washing bedding often, shampooing pets, vacuuming floors, and using flea combs and traps.
- Get rid of stacks of newspaper, papers, bags, and cardboard boxes that make good homes for pests. Recycle them if you can.

Keep Pests Out of Your Home

- Seal cracks and crevices where pests can get in your home.
- Check things like bags and boxes for roaches before bringing them inside.
- Teach your children not to share combs, hats, or coats at school or daycare.

Use Pesticides Safely

- Read the label and follow the instructions. Use only the amount directed and for the purpose listed.
- Place all pesticides, including baits, out of the reach of children.
- When using a pesticide, keep children away until it has dried or for the time the label recommends.
- Protect your skin, your eyes, and your lungs while using pesticides.
- Always wash your hands after use. Never smoke, eat, or drink while using a pesticide.
- Look for signal words. All pesticide labels include words such as **Caution**, **Warning**, or **Danger** to warn you about a product's hazards.

The word **Caution** shows up on a pesticide label when a product is the least harmful to people.

Warning means a product is more poisonous than one with a Caution label

Danger means a product is very poisonous or irritating. Use a pesticide that has this word on its label with extreme care because it can burn your skin or eyes very badly.

- Wash clothing you wore while using a pesticide in a separate load from other laundry.
- If you have questions about using a pesticide, call the company that made it. An 800 number should be on the label. You can also call the National Pesticide Information Center at 1-800-858-7378.
- Mix and use only the amount you need so you don't have leftovers.
- Mix pesticides outdoors or in an area with plenty of fresh air. (Never mix them in the kitchen.)

Bug Repellant

When putting bug repellant on children, read all directions first. Do not use over cuts or broken skin. Do not apply to eyes, mouth, hands, or directly on the face. Use just enough to cover skin or clothing. Don't use it under clothing.

Storing and Disposing of Pesticides

- Store pesticides where children and pets can't reach them or in a locked cabinet.
- Store pesticides only in the container they came in. Never put them in a soft drink bottle or any other kind of container.
- Follow the directions on the label for the right way to throw away pesticides.
- Never use an empty pesticide container for something else.

Helpful Tips

Tips For Your Lawn and Garden

- Use lawn seed and plants that grow well in your area and fight disease.
- Think about putting up with a few weeds or insects rather than using pesticides.
- Use your muscles. You can keep weeds down by hand pulling or hoeing.
- Clean up dead leaves and debris to get rid of homes for pests.
- Make sure you know what the pest or problem is before using a pesticide.
- Use pesticides only where the pests are.
- Your local Cooperative Extension office can help with lawn and garden care.

Tips For Preparing Food

- Wash and scrub all fruits and vegetables under running tap water.
- After washing, peel fruits and vegetables when possible.
- Throw away the outer leaves of leafy vegetables like lettuce and other greens.
- Trim fat from meat and skin from poultry and fish—some pesticides collect in fat.
- Eat lots of different foods from lots of different sources.

Additional Resources:

- EPA Office of Pesticide Programs, 703/305-5017—
www.epa.gov/pesticides/consumer.htm
You can order these publications:
Help! It's a Roach: A Roach Prevention Activity Book
Citizen's Guide to Pest Control and Pesticide Safety
10 Tips to Protect Your Family From Pesticide and Lead Poisoning
Pesticides and Child Safety
Pesticides and Food: What you and Your Family Need to Know
- National Pesticide Information Center, 800/858-7378—www.npic.orst.edu
- Food and Drug Administration Food Safety Information Service Hotline, 888/
SAFE-FOOD (888/723-3663), 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday
- The *Home*A*Syst* handbook gives more details about pesticides and other healthy
home topics, 608/262-0024—www.uwex.edu/homeasyst
- For more information on non-toxic pest control contact the Bio-Integral Resource
Center 510/ 524-2567—www.birc.org

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