

# Pesticides

**What are they, and how do they impact your health.**

## What are pesticides?

Pesticides are substances that repel or kill unwanted pests such as insects, rodents, fungi, and weeds. All pesticides have the potential to be toxic to humans. Pesticides sold in the United States must be registered with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

### What are the adverse human health effects that can occur from exposure to pesticides?

- Exposure to pesticides **at an early age** can disrupt and permanently change the structure and function of organs and body systems.
- **Short-term exposure** may cause temporary symptoms such as headaches, dizziness, muscle twitching, weakness, tingling sensations, nausea, respiratory impacts, birth defects and even death.
- **Long-term exposure** can cause reproductive harm, neurological and developmental effects, disruption of the endocrine system, and increase the risk of cancer.

Click [here](#) for data on reported pesticide exposures in NJ

### Why should you be concerned about your pets and exposure to pesticides?

Pets can bring chemicals into the home from lawn treatments. Pets are also at risk to adverse health effects from pesticide exposure both in and out of the home, particularly ingestion due to their grooming habits. Research has shown:

- Health effects in dogs and cats are similar to those reported in human studies.
- Dogs exposed to herbicide-treated lawns and gardens had double the chance of developing canine lymphoma and a greatly increased risk of bladder cancer in certain breeds.
- Cats had an increased risk of oral squamous cell carcinoma.



### Why are children most at risk to adverse health effects from pesticide exposure?

Infants and young children are more likely to suffer health effects from chemical pesticides because they:

- Spend time on the floor where pesticide residues tend to concentrate and linger.
- Pick up toys and other objects off the floor and put objects and fingers into their mouths.
- Can get into small spaces where they can touch cracks, crevices, and holes where pesticides may have been applied.
- Absorb a higher proportion of environmental contaminants into their bodies than adults.
- Have brain and nervous systems at early, critical stages of development that are vulnerable to damage by pesticides.

### How can you prevent exposure to pesticides but still safely control pests?

- The [National Pesticide Information Center \(NPIC\)](#) has information on how to implement Integrated Pest Management (IPM) in homes, schools, workplaces, farms, lawns, and gardens. IPM is an inexpensive approach to control pests and protect public health and the environment at the same time.
- NJDOH has a [guidance document](#) and [fact sheet](#) on how to implement IPM in your home to reduce pesticide exposure.
- Pesticide use in [lawn care](#) can be reduced or eliminated by using IPM. When followed, residents should be able to rely very little, if at all, on chemical pesticides for weed and insect pest control.

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