

CHILDREN AND PESTICIDES

Fact Sheet

The compelling and growing science linking exposure to pesticides with serious health outcomes, especially for children, mandates that lawmakers use every opportunity to help reduce those exposures. Asthma, in particular, has become an epidemic among New York City school children, and certain pesticides have been directly implicated in this alarming trend. Exposure to pesticides has also been linked with increased risk of certain types of cancer, neurological and endocrine system harm and birth defects.

A report by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) noted that "Children encounter pesticides daily and have unique susceptibilities to their potential toxicity. Acute poisoning risks are clear, and understanding of chronic health implications from both acute and chronic exposures are emerging." (*Pediatrics* 2012; 130:e1757-e1763).

Moreover, the latest research on endocrine-disrupting chemicals, including many pesticide products, is based on the fact that there are certain critical windows of vulnerability during a child's development when the rapid growth of body systems can be disrupted from even extremely low-level exposures to toxins. These windows include early childhood and puberty.

The proposed legislation prohibiting the use of pesticides at NY city parks where children play is an important step toward ensuring the health of our very youngest citizens.

- Children take in more of any environmental toxin, including pesticides, relative to their body weight, than adults. They have immature immune, detoxification and elimination systems and lack certain enzymes that help them break down poisons.
- Children have unique behaviors, including playing close to the ground and engaging in hand-to-mouth activity.
- Children aged 6-11 have higher levels of lawn chemicals in their blood than all other age categories.
- A National Cancer Institute report found that children are at risk for brain and other childhood cancers and six times more likely to develop leukemia when exposed to common lawn pesticides.
- Translocation studies show that lawn pesticides are easily tracked into homes and schools on shoes. Pesticides are designed to break down with rain, sunlight and soil microbial activity, but indoors they can remain hazardous for long periods of time.

*Prepared by Grassroots Environmental Education, a
science-based non-profit organization.
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