

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Are pesticides harmful to People?

Pesticides are designed to be harmful to pests. When not used properly, pesticides can cause harm to humans, animals, or the environment. The severity of pesticide poisoning depends on the toxicity of the chemical ingredients, the amount of the pesticide, the length of time of the pesticide exposure, and how the pesticide enters the body. Reading the label and following the directions can prevent most pesticide-related illnesses.

### How can I be exposed to pesticide?

Exposures occur when you come into contact with a pesticide and it enters the body through ingestion, inhalation, or contact with the skin, eyes or mucous membranes. A potential risk of pesticide poisoning may be present if pesticides are nearby but they must contact your body to harm you. If a pesticide is in the air, it can be inhaled and may pass into the bloodstream. If it is in food or water, or if it is accidentally swallowed, it can enter through the stomach. Certain pesticides may pass through the skin and into the bloodstream. Some pesticides may also enter through other routes such as the skin, eyes, nose and throat and cause effects in these areas.

## Examples of Pesticide Exposure

**Drift or Over spray:** Pesticide sprayed from an airplane, tractor or a home sprayer may drift or blow onto people living, working or going to school near agricultural fields or other nearby sites. If this exposure is due to an agricultural aerial application or is a misuse of a pesticide according to the label, the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS) Bureau of Pesticides at **515-281-8591** can be notified.

**Occupational:** Farm workers, applicators, or mixers may come into contact with high concentrations and large volumes of pesticides. Risky activities include mixing, applying pesticides, weeding and hand harvesting crops. Workers may unknowingly expose their families by carrying pesticides into their homes on their bodies, clothes and shoes, or by washing their work clothes together with the rest of the family laundry. Exposures of farm workers to pesticides are investigated by the Iowa Department of Public Health, Pesticide Program at **1-800-972-2026**.

**Household:** Improper use, storage, and application of household pesticides such as insect repellents, foggers and baits, rodent poisons, weed killers, flea and tick control products and disinfectants can lead to poisonings when not used properly.

**What Should I do if I am exposed to a pesticide?**

1. First Aid Treatment:

**Poison on Skin or Clothing** - Remove cloths immediately and wash skin with running water for fifteen minutes.

**Poison in eyes** - Rinse eyes with water for fifteen minutes.

**Inhaled Poison** - Leave area and seek fresh air.

**Swallowed Poison** - Read label to determine if there is something you should do right away.

2. Call Iowa Statewide Poison Control Center at 1-800-222-1222. A professional staff of nurses, pharmacists, and physicians trained in toxicology are at the ISPCC 24 hours a day. The staff provides poison information and treatment recommendations related to pesticide exposure.
3. Seek medical help from your physician or hospital emergency room. Bring with you:

Labels of all pesticides to which you may have been exposed.

Records indicating what was sprayed from the person or company that sprayed.

4. Contact the Department of Health, Poison Control program at **1-800-972-2026**.

To report a misuse of pesticides, contact the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS) at **515-281-8591**