



REDUCING PESTICIDE USE IN SCHOOLS: A PARENT'S GUIDE

A FACTSHEET FROM MIDWEST PESTICIDE ACTION CENTER

Do you have questions about pesticide use in your child's school? Did you know that Illinois has laws designed to protect Illinois public school children from exposure to pesticides? This guide will help you understand the problems and solutions around pesticide use in schools and give you the tools to create a healthier learning environment. Make it your business to find out how and when pesticides are being used at your child's school.

SOME THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- ☘ Children spend much of their time in schools, childcare facilities and on playgrounds - three areas where pesticides are commonly used.
- ☘ Pesticides are often used unnecessarily.
- ☘ Pesticides cause harm to all living things. They are especially dangerous to children's health.
- ☘ Integrated Pest Management (IPM) is a safer, more effective approach to preventing pests without relying on pesticides.
- ☘ Illinois has laws to protect public school children from pesticides (details on the back).

PESTICIDES AND YOUR CHILD'S HEALTH

Children come in contact with pesticides when they're released into the air they breathe or when applied to the surfaces they touch. Spraying, bombing and fogging are of particular concern.

Children are at higher risk from pesticides because they are still developing, and often play on the ground and put objects in their mouths. There are serious health problems linked to pesticides—like cancer, asthma, leukemia, and behavioral disorders. In fact, pesticides are the second most common source of childhood poisoning.^{1,2,3,4,5}

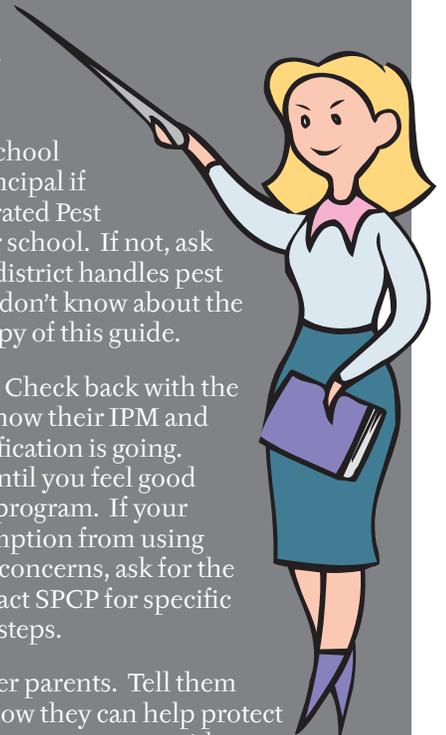


SIMPLE STEPS TO A HEALTHIER SCHOOL

STEP #1 Ask your school administrator or principal if they are using Integrated Pest Management at your school. If not, ask how your school or district handles pest control now. If they don't know about the laws, send them a copy of this guide.

STEP #2 Follow up. Check back with the school and find out how their IPM and parent and staff notification is going. Call every so often until you feel good about your school's program. If your school seeks an exemption from using IPM because of cost concerns, ask for the cost details and contact SPCP for specific suggestions on next steps.

STEP #3 Talk to other parents. Tell them about the laws and how they can help protect children from unnecessary contact with pesticides. Invite a speaker to a parents' meeting or get fact sheets about the issues and give them to interested parents. SPCP can provide speakers and fact sheets.



INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT: WHAT IS IT?

IPM is a proven method of pest control that emphasizes simple, inexpensive prevention practices that cause the least harm to people and the environment. IPM focuses on eliminating the cause of pests by minimizing access to food, water, and hiding places. Pesticides are used only after other options have been explored.



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PEST CONTROL LAWS IN ILLINOIS SCHOOLS

In 1999 Illinois passed laws to protect children by requiring safer pest management practices in Illinois public schools. You can use these laws to help make sure your school is using safer pest control to reduce your child's contact with pesticides.

Indoor Pesticide Use

IPM in Schools, Public Act 91-0525: Schools must adopt and use Integrated Pest Management if they can afford to do so. If a school chooses not to use IPM, someone from the school must be sent to an approved IPM training program.

Notification: Schools must either keep a list of parents and staff who want to find out before pesticides are sprayed at school, or the school can tell all parents and staff before spraying occurs. Notice must happen at least 2 days before the spraying happens and say when, where and what is being used.



Effective date: August 1, 2000

Outdoor Pesticide Use

Parents' Right to Know, Lawn Care Products Application and Notice Act, Public Act 96-0424: Like the indoor law, this law requires schools and childcares to notify parents and staff four days before pesticide (including herbicide) use outdoors on school grounds. This law also recommends natural lawn care.

Effective date: August 12, 2009

More About Being Notified

Notification is one of the most powerful parts of the IPM laws. **It is required whether or not the school adopts IPM** and gives parents the power to make informed decisions regarding a child's health. Health concerns might include asthma, lung diseases, allergies, or other medical conditions that could be made worse by pesticides.

RESOURCES:

There are many valuable resources for parents, staff and students who want to create a healthier school environment by reducing pesticide use. Here's a short list of useful phone numbers and websites to get your school started:

1. Midwest Pesticide Action Center www.midwestpesticideaction.org

Our website has fact sheets and other Illinois specific IPM in schools information, or you can call 773/878-7378 ext. 204.

2. University of Florida, School IPM website www.schoolipm.ifas.ufl.edu

A national website for IPM in schools, including how to get started for parents, administration, faculty/staff and pest managers.

3. Illinois Department of Public Health www.idph.state.il.us/envhealth/ipm/publications.htm

This web address will link you to guidelines to help your school understand Illinois' laws, or you can call 217/782-5830 to speak with someone directly.

Footnotes:

¹ Salam, Muhammed Towhid, Yu-Fen Li, Bryan Langholz and Frenk David Gilliland. Early-Life Environmental Risk Factors for Asthma: Findings from the Children's Health Study. *Environmental Health Perspectives* 2004;6:760-765.

² Ma, Xiaomei, Patricia Al. Vuffler, Rabert B. Gunier, Gary Dahl, Martyn T. Smith, Kyndaron Reinier, and Peggy Reynolds. Critical Windows of Exposure to Household Pesticides and Risk of Childhood Leukemia. *Environmental Health Perspectives* 2002; 110:955-960.

³ F. menegaux, A Baruchel, Y Bertrand, B Lescoeur, G Leverger, B Nelken, D Sommelet, D hemon and J Clavel. Household exposure to pesticides and risk of childhood acute leukaemia. *Occup Environ Med.* 2006; 63:131-134.

⁴ W Alarcon, G Clavert, J Blondell, L Mehler, J Sievert, M Propeck, D Tibbetts, A Becker, M Lackovic, et al. Acute Illnesses Associated with Pesticide Exposures in Schools. *Journal of American Medicine* 2005; 294:4:455-465.

⁵ From: "A Decade of Children's Environmental Health Research: Highlights from EPA's Science to Achieve Results Program." U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Research and Development (8101R), December 2007.



Midwest Pesticide Action Center is dedicated to reducing the health risks and environmental impacts of pesticides and promoting safer alternatives.

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www.midwestpesticideaction.org