



HEALTHY SCHOOLS FOR HEALTHY KIDS

HOW TO TALK ABOUT PESTICIDES WITH YOUR SCHOOL OR DAYCARE

NCAP works to protect community and environmental health and inspire the use of ecologically sound solutions to reduce the use of pesticides. We work directly with farmers, schools, parks and cities that seek to end their reliance on pesticides.

In order to perform their best, students need a healthy environment. Improving school environmental health can positively impact learning and achievement as well as bring financial benefits. All children have a right to a healthy environment and schools have the opportunity to protect students and employees by reducing harmful pesticide use. Parents and community members have been influential in gaining protections in schools across the country. They have implemented Integrated Pest Management (IPM) policies, a method encouraging prevention and using pesticides only as a last result. Some have even implemented pesticide-free schools! Use the following suggestions and tools to talk to your school or day care about pesticide use. For more facts and citations, see our *Pesticides in Schools* fact sheet.

STEP ONE: START WITH WHY

Exposure to chemical pesticides is associated with harmful health impacts and children need protection from chemical exposures in school to reach their full potential. Because children are at greater risk from exposure due to their developing bodies, schools have a responsibility to use products with safer and less toxic chemicals or to eliminate chemical use entirely. Pediatricians and health agencies (including the American Academy of Pediatrics¹, the Environmental Protection Agency² and Washington Department of Health³) recommend schools use Integrated Pest Management as a means to reduce risk of pests and pesticide exposure to children.

STEP TWO: RESEARCH YOUR SCHOOL & DISTRICT

Call the school/district or look on the school website to find the right person to ask about an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) policy. Some questions to get you started:

- Does your district have an IPM policy and an IPM Coordinator?
- Will they send you the policy or can you find it online?
- Do they notify parents and neighbors when they spray pesticides?
- Does the school rely on scheduled pesticide application regardless of identifying pests? Do they have established thresholds for when they would take action to use an intervention, such as a sticky trap?
- How many complaints about pests or pesticides per month do they receive?
- Who is the decision maker with the authority to maintain the school without pesticides both indoors and outdoors?

If your school has used chemical pesticides, take pictures of the locations (dead and dry grass along fences or borders is a typical indicator) and take pictures of the application notification.



STEP THREE: GRAB YOUR FRIENDS

Ask other concerned parents to join you in meeting with decision makers. Or, ask parents to sign a letter or petition in support of IPM (change.org is a free platform for signatures). Ask gardening groups to get involved and sports teams where kids play in the open fields and could be exposed during an application. Find like-minded parents and attend the PTA meeting or school board meeting. (We also have a draft PTA resolution! Email us for a copy.) Talk to others about this issue, write a letter to the paper, post on social media when you've got a meeting. Keep the momentum by getting more people involved.

STEP FOUR: ASK FOR A MEETING

Ask for a meeting with the decision maker; try to have at least one other strong supporter with you. Make it clear you are concerned about chemical pesticide use and you want to encourage alternatives. Be prepared with facts and information and be ready to listen to why they feel they need pesticides. Some facilities managers don't understand that there are alternatives and strategies to prevent pests—from bugs to mice to weeds—and therefore pesticides. Change takes time! Be available to follow up in a few weeks.

STEP FIVE: ENCOURAGE ALTERNATIVES & POLICY SOLUTIONS

The most successful IPM plans include education and regular monitoring with inspection. This prevents pests and pest outbreaks, eliminating the need for pesticides and saving time and money on clean-up.

Effective alternatives are available. Preventing pests, and therefore the need for pesticides, gets to the source of the problem instead of temporary sprays and chemicals. Fix the underlying problem for long term solutions.

Tips when you are talking about pesticides:

- Emphasize children and employee health
- Encourage a long term policy
- Stress cost-savings
- Use reasonable language

NCAP is here to help! We can conduct site visits, provide resources and suggestions and help your school write an IPM policy to offer a long-term solution where chemical pesticides are a last resort!



STEP SIX: KNOW YOUR FACTS



Chemical pesticides, including herbicides, insecticides and rodenticides, are associated with pediatric cancers, decreased cognitive function, and behavioral problems⁴. IPM can benefit schools by improving indoor air quality, which has been found to result in better attendance, lower teacher turnover and increase productivity⁵. Students need protection from chemical exposure because they are more susceptible to the negative impacts from pesticides than adults. Since their physiology is developing, pesticides can disrupt natural growth processes resulting in long term negative health effects. It's possible to maintain the indoor and outdoor spaces on school campuses without the use of harmful pesticides. In addition, the EPA recommends IPM as a long-term solution to controlling pests and reducing pesticide use near children.

STEP SEVEN: FOLLOW UP

We'd love to hear from you and we are here to help! We can provide fact sheets on the pesticides used, suggestions for alternatives, letters of support, and if someone is available we can come to your meetings. Email us on your progress and stay in touch. Most importantly, follow up after your meeting and after the school agrees to reduce pesticides. Thank them for taking this important step to safeguard children's health! And, make sure they follow through on their commitments.

¹ American Academy of Pediatrics. (2012). POLICY STATEMENT: Pesticide Exposure in Children. *Pediatrics: The Official Journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics*, 131 (5), 1757-1763.
² & ³ McLerran, D., Koenig, R., Dorn, R., & Wiesman, J. (2014). *School IPM Letter of Support*. Seattle: US EPA.
⁴ Roberts JR, Karr CK; American Academy of Pediatrics, Council on Environmental Health. *Technical report—pesticide exposure in children*. *Pediatrics*. 2012;130(6)
⁵ Chambers, Kelly, Thomas Green, Dawn Gouge, Janet Hurley, Tim Stock, Zack Burns, Mark Shour, Carrie Foss, Fudd Graham, Kathy Murray, Lynn Braband, Sherry Glick and Matt Anderson, 2011. *The Business Case for Integrated Pest Management in Schools: Cutting Cost and Increasing Benefits*. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Please share this information with parents, students, teachers and school employees to help minimize and prevent the use of harmful chemical pesticides in our schools and daycares.