

When it comes to the cosmetic or, non-essential, use of pesticides, the Canadian Cancer Society is guided by the **precautionary principle**. Because the cosmetic use of pesticides has the potential to cause harm, and safe, effective alternatives exist, the Canadian Cancer Society is calling for a ban on cosmetic pesticide use. In other words, it is better to be safe than sorry.

**For more information see:**

**The Canadian Cancer Society**  
[www.cancer.ca](http://www.cancer.ca)

**The Ontario College of Family Physicians: Pesticide Literature Review**  
[www.ocfp.on.ca/English/OCFP/Communications/CurrentIssues/Pesticides/default.asp?s=1](http://www.ocfp.on.ca/English/OCFP/Communications/CurrentIssues/Pesticides/default.asp?s=1)

**Basil KL et al. Cancer health effects of pesticides, Systematic review.**  
Canadian Family Physician, 2007; 53:1711. Available at: <http://www.cfp.ca/cgi/reprint/53/10/1704>

**International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC)**  
[www.iarc.fr/](http://www.iarc.fr/)

**U.S. National Toxicology Program (NTP) 11th Report on Carcinogens, 2005**  
<http://ntp-server.niehs.nih.gov/index.cfm?objectid=03C9B512-ACF8-C1F3-ADBA53CAE848F635>

**Lawn and Garden Pesticides: A Review of Human Exposure and Health Effects Research**  
[http://www.toronto.ca/health/pesticides/pdf/pesticides\\_lawnandgarden.pdf](http://www.toronto.ca/health/pesticides/pdf/pesticides_lawnandgarden.pdf)



# Start living...

...without pesticide exposure. If you knew that 50% of cancers could be prevented, wouldn't you want to do something? Well it's a fact. And there are lots of things we can do — all of us — in our community. For instance, reducing exposure to pesticides is one of the many things we can do to reduce the risk of cancer.

### What are pesticides?

Pesticides are used to control or kill weeds and unwanted plants (herbicides), insects (insecticides), animals (rodenticides) or fungal pests (fungicides). They can be purchased easily as over-the-counter products or ordered from pesticide supply companies. Examples of products that contain pesticides are insect repellents, pet flea and tick collars, mould removers and weed killers.

When pesticides are used to enhance the appearance of private lawns and gardens and have no benefit to human health, it is referred to as the **cosmetic use of pesticides**.

### Be Safe

The Canadian Cancer Society endorses the precautionary principle: "It is better to be safe than sorry."

### How pesticides harm health

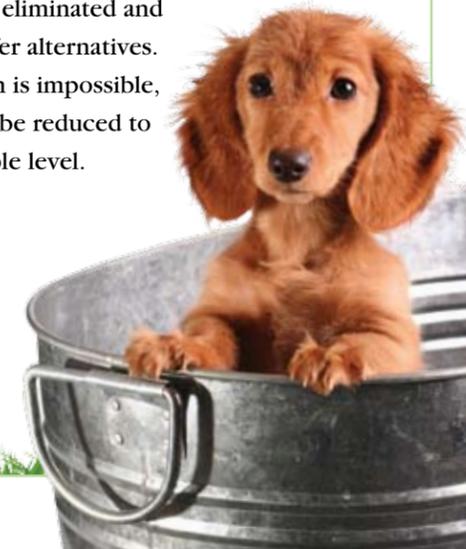
Some pesticides contain toxic chemicals that can be harmful to our health and the environment. There's a growing link between long-term low-level exposure to pesticides and more serious chronic health conditions, such as cancer. Numerous studies have linked pesticide exposure to both adult and childhood cancers, such as leukemia, brain tumours, lymphoma, and cancers that affect the prostate, kidney, pancreas and lung.

### Leading the way

The Canadian Cancer Society is leading the charge to educate people on the dangers of pesticide use on private lawns and gardens, and to convince municipal governments to pass bylaws that would restrict the cosmetic use of pesticides on private lawns and gardens, and public lands such as parks and playgrounds.

We strongly support an individual's right to know what they are being exposed to in the community in order to make informed decisions about health.

Where possible, exposure to consumer products that contain cancer-causing substances should be identified and eliminated and replaced with safer alternatives. When elimination is impossible, exposure should be reduced to the lowest possible level.



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## Children and others at higher risk

Pesticides are particularly dangerous to babies and children because their immune systems are still developing. Children's normal behaviour, such as playing on the floor or lawn and the tendency to put objects in their mouths, places them at greater risk. The elderly and people with weakened immune systems or those exposed to pesticides at work are also more vulnerable.

## How to avoid exposure?

Understanding how you might become exposed to pesticides is the first step. Exposure can occur by breathing in pesticides circulating in the air, eating food that has been treated with pesticides, or absorbing pesticides through the skin by handling pesticide products.

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The most common way people absorb pesticides is through the skin after touching a surface where pesticides have been applied. Pesticides can remain in the environment or can be tracked indoors.

Even if you don't use pesticides on your property, your family can still be affected by pesticide exposure. Pesticides can be spread by spray droplets blown by the wind. Pesticide residue is carried by water to lower areas. Pesticides can move through the soil in a process known as leaching or through the air after being turned into a gas.

## Alternatives

There are many safe, effective alternatives to pesticides, like soap mixtures, borax, acetic acid (vinegar), and corn gluten. We can also replace the use of dangerous chemicals with new habits.

We are talking about simple things like aerating regularly, over-seeding, mowing high, and watering infrequently. Planting native, drought tolerant plants will also promote better growth and fewer weeds. All possible — and easy!

## Impact on business

Studies show that pesticide bylaws do not harm business. In regions where pesticide bylaws are in place, businesses have shifted successfully to non-toxic alternatives, and the sales and offerings of non-toxic alternatives are growing.

## Supporting a bylaw and community education program

The Canadian Cancer Society is working with concerned individuals and organizations to protect our communities from the harmful effects of pesticides. The introduction of a bylaw supported by a community education program can reduce public exposure to the toxic chemicals in pesticides. Municipalities have the right to ban or regulate the cosmetic use of pesticides and safer alternatives. Let your local Mayor and City Council know that you support a pesticide-free community.

There are many safe, effective alternatives to pesticides.

