



Canadian Cancer Society
Société canadienne du cancer

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1 888 939-3333 | www.cancer.ca

Our position on cosmetic use of pesticides

Pesticides are sometimes used to improve the appearance of green spaces by controlling unwanted weeds and plants. Using pesticides in this way is referred to as cosmetic use of pesticides.

Canadian Cancer Society position

We are very concerned about the cosmetic and non-essential use of potentially cancer-causing substances on green spaces. The Society calls for a ban on the use and sale of cosmetic pesticides.

Our position is based on the current body of evidence suggesting a connection between pesticides and cancer. Moreover, the cosmetic use of pesticides may cause harm and provides no health benefit. According to the precautionary principle, “When an activity raises threats of harm to human health or the environment, precautionary measures should be taken even if some cause-and-effect relationships are not fully established scientifically.”

Our call for a ban does not apply to using pesticides in agriculture to grow food, ensure public health and safety or prevent environmental damage. In these instances, the issue is much more complex since there can be health benefits in controlling pests.

Non-cosmetic use of pesticides

Safer alternatives

The Society supports the use of safer ways to maintain and improve the appearance of lawns, gardens, parks and other green spaces. The Society does not support the use of Integrated Pest Management for cosmetic purposes.

Golf courses and sporting facilities

The Society wants a phase-out of pesticide use at golf courses and sporting facilities. A phase-out approach is very important at golf courses and sporting facilities that:

- children use often and for long periods of time
- are next to residential and public areas

If needed, pesticides should be used as the last option, in the smallest possible amount, and only where needed to make facilities usable. People should stay away from treated areas for at least 48 hours after the last pesticide application.

Home fruit and vegetable gardens

Pesticide use in home or personal fruit and vegetable gardens should be phased out, if not eliminated completely. The risk of pesticide exposure in your garden is different

than in agricultural settings. Pesticide use in agriculture typically has more controls in place to reduce pesticide exposure, such as:

- training requirements for applicators to properly use personal protective equipment
- strategies to reduce pesticide residue levels and pesticide drift
- rules to limit access to sprayed areas

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