



## Prevention



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## Ornamental use of pesticides on lawns, gardens and parks

Pesticides may be used to enhance the appearance of lawns and gardens, as well as parks, recreational facilities and golf courses, by controlling unwanted weeds and plants. When pesticides are used to simply prevent blemishes and other imperfections, it is referred to as the ornamental (or cosmetic) use of pesticides. The Canadian Cancer Society does not support the use of ornamental pesticides.

## Ornamental pesticides and cancer: what we know so far

Studies show that pesticide exposure is associated with cancer risk for adults and children. Although the evidence is not yet conclusive, it is growing and suggestive.

The benefits of eating more vegetables and fruits outweigh the risks from pesticides. The use of pesticides to improve the appearance of lawns, parks and other outdoor settings does not provide any similar health benefit. Since the activity poses potential harm, precaution should be taken and ornamental pesticide use should be avoided, if not prohibited.

## Canadian Cancer Society position

The Canadian Cancer Society is very concerned about the use of potentially carcinogenic (cancer-causing) substances for the purpose of enhancing the appearance of, for example, private gardens and lawns as well as parks, recreational facilities and golf courses (ornamental use). Evidence linking pesticides and cancer is suggestive and growing.

The precautionary principle states that "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." Since ornamental use of pesticides has no countervailing health benefit and has the potential to cause harm, we call for a ban on the use of pesticides on lawns and gardens.

## Pesticide drift

Even individuals who don't work with ornamental pesticides can still be exposed to it. Pesticides sprayed on a lawn can drift or runoff and mix with the air, soil or a surrounding body of water. Pesticides can also collect on plants and objects that people can come into contact with.

## Reducing your risk from ornamental pesticides

Ways to protect your family from ornamental pesticides include:

- Stay indoors with your children and pets if a close neighbour or someone else is applying pesticides outdoors near your home. Keep windows and exterior doors closed.
- Ask your neighbour to warn you if pesticides will be sprayed on their lawn. Stay away from treated areas

## RELATED INFORMATION

[Pesticide exposure and cancer risk](#)[Ornamental pesticides](#)[Pesticides on vegetables and fruit](#)[Pressure-treated lumber](#)[Pesticide use to control West Nile](#)[Reducing pesticide exposure](#)

## QUESTIONS ABOUT CANCER?

Ask us

1 888 939-3333

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that have been exposed to pesticides for a minimum of 24 hours, especially children and pets.

- Don't walk or play close to a lawn or park with a sign that it has been sprayed with pesticides.

#### [What we're doing about the ornamental use of pesticides](#)

Read more about what the Canadian Cancer Society is doing about the ornamental use of pesticides.

#### [What you can do](#)

Contact your legislator to let them know that you support a ban on the ornamental use of pesticides in your community and learn about safer alternatives to ornamental pesticides.

#### [Re-evaluating lawn and turf pesticides](#)

Some commonly used lawn and turf pesticides are being re-evaluated by Health Canada's Pest Management Regulatory Agency. The re-evaluation was supposed to be completed in 2001. The Canadian Cancer Society is concerned about the delay.

#### [For more information](#)

For more information about why we've taken this position on the ornamental use of pesticides and how you can reduce your risk [e-mail](#) or call our [Cancer Information Service](#) at 1 888 939-3333.

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