

# Pesticides – What You Need to Know



Best practices for healthy child care centers



## Is there a problem with using pesticides in child care centers?

Yes. Infants and small children are more likely to suffer health effects from exposure to chemical pesticides because they:

- Spend time on the floor where pesticide residues tend to concentrate and linger.
- Pick up toys and other objects off the floor and put objects and fingers into their mouths.
- Can get into small spaces where they can touch cracks, crevices and holes where pesticides may have been applied.
- Absorb more environmental contaminants into their bodies than adults.
- Are still developing and some pesticides can interfere with a child's developing brain.

Many child care facilities hire pest control services to routinely apply pesticides for controlling pests, regardless of the actual need. The overuse of pesticides is a concern because:



- sprayed and fogged chemicals become airborne and settle on surfaces.
- children and staff touch these surfaces and unknowingly expose themselves to pesticide residues.

## What are the health impacts of pesticides?

Exposure to pesticides at an early age can disrupt and permanently change the structure and function of organs and body systems.

Acute exposure to pesticides may cause short-term effects such as headaches, dizziness, muscle twitching, weakness, tingling sensations, and nausea.

Long-term exposures can cause serious health effects such as birth defects, learning disabilities, behavioral changes, organ damage; forms of cancer (including leukemia, breast, and brain) and asthma.

It is well established that children repeatedly exposed to low levels of pesticides may suffer from health problems that do not show up for many years.



## How can child care centers control pests in their facility?

The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recommends that child care centers develop an integrated pest management (IPM) program to reduce pesticide risk and exposure to children and staff. IPM is a safer and less costly approach for effective pest management in a child care facility.

To learn about how to practice IPM in your child care center, please consult the [New Jersey Department of Health's IPM manual](#) that was developed for child care centers.

### Reference

[USEPA] Pesticides and Their Impact on Children: Key Facts and Talking Points. Office of Pesticide Programs. <https://bit.ly/2qvaZVC>