

# PESTICIDE SAFETY



Information

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

N No. 4

## First Aid and Emergency Decontamination

**First aid is any help given to a sick or injured person immediately after injury or exposure occurs until full medical care is available.**

Always tell your employer if someone gets sick or hurt at work. NEVER let sick or hurt people drive themselves to a doctor.

This leaflet contains steps that you and your employer can take to help you be ready in an emergency. Among other topics, your pesticide safety training from your employer will cover:

- Washing your hands, body, and clothing after working with pesticides and changing into clean clothes.
- Cleaning pesticide application equipment and personal protective equipment (PPE) that can be re-used.
- How and when to get emergency medical care.

However, accidents and emergencies can happen. There are steps you can take to be prepared in case of an emergency, and be better prepared to help yourself or others.

### HOW DO I GET READY FOR AN EMERGENCY?

1. Read the pesticide label:
  - a. The First Aid section lists what you should do if you or others are exposed.
  - b. The Precautionary Statements list hazards to people and ways to protect yourself, such as PPE to wear or engineering controls to use.
2. Safety Data Sheets provide information about first aid, potential symptoms, and emergency medical treatment.



**Disclaimer:** This leaflet is not a substitute for emergency medical care or the advice of a medical professional. A trained first aid provider can keep an injury or illness from getting worse, but is not a substitute for your employer's obligations to transport you or a sick individual to emergency medical care.

3. Know the signs and symptoms of both heat stress and pesticide exposure. Know first aid treatment and your employer's response procedures for both, including the name and location of the emergency medical facility.
4. Make sure you know where your decontamination supplies and pesticide first aid kit are.
5. Always know where you are. You may need to describe your location to emergency personnel.
6. Learn how to deal with emergency situations. One way to do this is to enroll in a first aid or CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) course.

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## WHAT SHOULD I DO IN AN EMERGENCY?

- Always protect yourself before you help others.
- If you believe you are sick from pesticides, you should stop work and leave the area **RIGHT AWAY**, then seek medical attention as soon as possible.
- If you believe someone else is sick, get the person away from the pesticides if you can without hurting yourself. Remember the sick person might have pesticides on them or be working in an area that could get pesticides on you.
- Get help **RIGHT AWAY**. Tell your supervisor. If you have a phone, call 911. Tell the 911 dispatcher the location and the nature of the emergency, and what pesticide(s) are involved. Have the pesticide label available and follow the dispatcher's instructions.
- Try to stop pesticides from getting in or on the sick person's body. You can find out how in the first aid procedures below.
- If you are sick, **DO NOT DRIVE YOURSELF**. Do not let someone else who is sick drive either. Your employer must immediately take you to the doctor.

**REMEMBER: Pesticides may not be the problem. It could be something else, like a heart attack or a heat illness.**

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## HOW CAN PESTICIDES GET INTO MY BODY?

There are four main ways:

1. Breathing them.
  2. Getting them on your skin.
  3. Getting them in your eyes.
  4. Swallowing them.
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# FIRST AID AND EMERGENCY DECONTAMINATION PROCEDURES

## Breathing Pesticides

You can breathe in a pesticide through your mouth or nose. This can be by breathing in the vapor or dust from an application, including pesticide drift, or by entering treated areas.

### First Aid for Breathing in Pesticides:

- Outdoors, move yourself or the exposed person to where the air is clean and away from where the pesticide was applied. In open areas, go at least 100 feet away. If there is wind, make sure the wind is blowing the pesticide away from you.
- If the exposed person is in an enclosed area, such as a vault, box-car, or a tarp-covered structure or commodity, do not go in unless you are wearing a Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) or other supplied-air respirator.
- Once out of the area, loosen any clothing that might make breathing difficult.
- If the exposed person is not breathing, give CPR if you know how. The emergency responders will take over when they arrive.
- Report to your supervisor and seek immediate medical treatment.

## Pesticides on Your Skin

Most often, pesticides get in your body through your skin. Pesticides get on your skin when you touch treated plants, soil, irrigation water, pesticide application equipment, and dirty work clothing. If you use your phone or the toilet with unwashed hands, pesticides may get on your skin too. Some pesticides move very fast through your skin. Others move slowly. Many pesticides can move through your clothes, even if they are waterproof. That is why it is important to get rid of any pesticide on your skin or clothing right away.

### First Aid for Pesticides on Your Skin:

The sooner you wash off the pesticide, the sooner the exposure ends.

- Take off all clothes that have pesticides on them. Try to limit contaminated clothing or PPE contact with your skin.
- Use decontamination supplies to wash immediately. You can also use a nearby body of water to rinse off the pesticide and follow up with decontamination supplies and soap.
- As soon as possible, shower with soap and shampoo to clean your skin and hair.
- If you have chemical burns, avoid using ointments, lotions, powders, and other drugs in first aid treatment.
- Get dressed only in clean clothes.
- Report to your supervisor and seek immediate medical treatment.



## Pesticides in Your Eyes

Pesticides can get into your eyes from pesticide drift or contaminated dust or material, or if you rub your eyes with your gloves or unwashed hands.

### First Aid for Pesticides in Your Eyes:

As part of your pesticide safety training, your employer will cover emergency eye flushing techniques. Some helpful tips are to:

- Rinse eyes with plenty of clean water. Rinsing in a shower is okay, but **DO NOT** use a hard spray. Otherwise, pour water over your eyes or use a gentle flow from a faucet or hose.
- Keep rinsing for at least 15 minutes.
- Keep the injured eye lower than the uninjured eye. **DO NOT** let rinse water run over the eye with pesticide in it into the other eye.
- If a contact lens is in the eye, begin flushing over the lens immediately. Then, if possible, remove the lens. The lens might hold the chemical against the eye.
- Blink while you are rinsing.
- **NEVER** force anybody's eyes open.
- Do not put medication or any substance in the rinsing water. Do not use any medicine or lotion after rinsing. **DO NOT** bandage the eye.
- Report to your supervisor and seek immediate medical treatment.



## Eating or Swallowing Pesticides

- You can transfer pesticides from your hands to your mouth if you drink, smoke, or eat without first washing your hands.
- Pesticide residues on treated plants may transfer to food, drink, or cigarettes brought into the treated area.
- **DO NOT** eat or drink from a container used to store pesticides, even if it has been washed.
- **DO NOT** drink irrigation water.
- **DO NOT** store pesticides in containers commonly used for food or drink. It often results in people accidentally drinking or eating the pesticide. This could cause them to become sick or die. It is illegal to store or mix pesticides in food or drink containers.

### First Aid if Someone Swallows a Pesticide:

- Get help **RIGHT AWAY**. If you have a phone, call 911, or the free phone number for California Poison Control Center, 1-800-222-1222.
- If the person is sleepy or unconscious from poisoning and you don't have a phone, **TAKE THEM TO A DOCTOR OR HOSPITAL RIGHT AWAY**. **DO NOT** give them anything to eat or drink. **DO NOT** try to make them throw up.



- If the person is awake and alert, follow the first aid instructions on the label. These instructions will tell you what will be helpful or dangerous. For instance, making the person throw up, or giving them milk or water to drink could be helpful, or it might be dangerous, depending on the pesticide. Never use salt water or mustard to make the person throw up. Some old labels may still recommend those things, but they are not safe.
- Report to your supervisor and seek immediate medical treatment as soon as possible.

## WHAT DOES THE DOCTOR NEED TO KNOW?

Your employer must tell the doctor or nurse exactly what happened with the pesticide(s) to make you or others sick. Your employer needs to warn the doctor or nurse that the person might be sick from pesticides so they can be prepared and protect themselves. Your employer needs to tell the doctor about the pesticide(s) involved and bring any information about the pesticide(s) to show the doctor. This information must include:

### Tell your doctor

**Pesticide(s) name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Active ingredient(s):** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**The EPA registration number:** \_\_\_\_\_

**The safety data sheet (SDS) on the pesticide (y/n):** \_\_\_\_\_

**How the pesticide was used:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**How the exposure could have happened:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



*If you don't get all the information you need in your training or want to make a pesticide use complaint, you should call your County Agricultural Commissioner, or the DPR for more information. You can find the Commissioner's number in your local white pages phone directory, by calling 1-87PestLine, or at: <http://www.cdafa.ca.gov/exec/county/countymap/>*

**DPR's Regional Offices are:**

- Northern (West Sacramento) 916/376-8960
- Central (Clovis) 559/297-3511
- Southern (Anaheim) 714/279-7690

**Pesticide Complaint?**

**1-87PestLine**  
INFORMATION LINE



**1-877-378-5463**