

Doctors' Rx: Say 'no' to brain toxicant

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[Health professionals](#) are adding their voices to the demand that EPA protect children from the brain toxicant chlorpyrifos.

Citing a growing body of [scientific evidence](#) linking exposure to this widely used pesticide with harms to children's health, more than [two dozen health care professionals](#) from across the country submitted a letter to EPA yesterday, calling on the agency to follow their prescription and take the pesticide completely off the market.

"Fruits and vegetables are essential for healthy children, but shouldn't be grown with chlorpyrifos," said Dr. Ted Schettler, MD, MPH, Science Director of the Science and Environmental Health Network, and a signatory of the letter to EPA. "Children in rural communities face a double dose of this brain poison. They are exposed to chlorpyrifos drifting from neighboring fields, and again when the pesticide is on their food."

Already banned for home use a decade ago, chlorpyrifos is still used on farms throughout the country, where it can [drift](#) into neighboring schools and playgrounds. In California alone, over 1.2 million pounds of the chemical are applied each year.

As noted in the letter, [children are uniquely vulnerable](#) to pesticide exposure because of their developing bodies and nervous systems. Recent science links chlorpyrifos exposure to [decreased IQ](#) and increased rates of [ADHD](#) in children.

Chlorpyrifos is applied to many crops that parents consider to be healthy for their children, including nuts, citrus, grapes and broccoli. Unfortunately residues left on the food, as well as the pesticide's ability to drift from agricultural fields, puts children — and especially rural children — at the greatest risk.

The closing passage from the joint health care professional [letter sums it up well:](#)

We urge EPA to act now on the weight of scientific evidence of health harms of chlorpyrifos for children and fetuses. It is time that EPA take action to protect the public health and provide a healthy legacy for our children and for future generations. We call on EPA to cancel all uses of the pesticide chlorpyrifos.

A history of delay

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EPA's review of the health impacts of chlorpyrifos - which ended yesterday - is in response to a legal petition filed in 2007 and a lawsuit filed by NRDC and Earthjustice on behalf of PAN and other groups in 2010, after the agency delayed action for three years.

To settle the suit, EPA agreed to make a decision on whether to ban chlorpyrifos. So what's the real hold-up? Despite the clear scientific evidence, the pesticide's manufacturer Dow AgroSciences has been fighting to keep the product on the market as long as possible.

The question for EPA is clear: how much longer do we wait before you follow doctors' orders and take brain toxins off the menu?

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