

Pesticides are not heart healthy

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Researchers in Sweden have confirmed that exposure to pesticides classified as [persistent organic pollutants](#) (POPs) increases the incidence of atherosclerosis, or hardening of the arteries.

Known to be a “major risk factor” for heart attacks and strokes, atherosclerosis is one of many health threats posed by POPs pesticides, which can persist in the environment for years or decades after use. In fact, this [study](#) comes on the heels of several others in recent years that show a correlation between POPs and health harms associated with poor heart health, such as hypertension, [obesity](#), and [diabetes](#).

Chemical burden in our bodies

POPs build up in all living creatures, becoming more concentrated as they move up the food chain. Most can be passed from [mother to child during pregnancy](#) and breastfeeding, and — in addition to threatening cardiovascular health — many are linked to other serious health effects including birth defects, [infertility](#) and [cancer](#).

The [new study](#) looked at 1,016 adults age 70 or older in the small industrial city of Uppsala, Sweden. Researchers tested participants for 23 environmental toxins, including DDE (the breakdown product of DDT) and PCBs.

The scientists then compared participant levels of environmental pollutants with the amount of plaque build-up in their carotid artery, and found a significant link between POPs and heart health even after controlling for other cardiovascular risk factors like gender, weight, high blood pressure, high cholesterol and smoking.

In a [statement](#) released with the study, Dr. Monica Lind, Associate Professor in Environmental Medicine at Uppsala University, said:

In Sweden, and in many countries in the world, many of these substances are forbidden today, but since they are so long-lived they’re still out there in our environment. We ingest these environmental toxicants with the food we eat, and since they are stored in our bodies, the levels grow higher the older we get.

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Given their long life in the environment, POPs can travel incredible distances on global air and water currents and are found in people's bodies in regions around the globe, including in the [Arctic](#) where the chemicals have never been used.

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