Poisoned fruit

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Last month, 14 children between the ages of two and six lost their lives to pesticide poisoning in Bangladesh after eating contaminated litchi (or lychee) fruit.

As reported by the Bangladesh daily New Age, the specific pesticides responsible have not yet been identified. But samples of the poisonous fruit are currently being tested by the Center for Disease Control & Prevention in Atlanta.

Meanwhile, regulatory agencies in Bangladesh blame farmers and consumers for the tragedy, according to the New Age article.

Protecting kids?

Most pesticide poisonings among children involve accidental ingestion, often of pesticides stored in misleading containers or home use insecticides. But contamination of food or water that leads to death is not particularly rare. The tragic case of Tauccamarca, in which 24 of the Peruvian village's 48 children died after consuming powdered milk tainted with the organophosphate pesticide methyl parathion, is just one story of many.

Pesticide poisoning occurs most often in developing countries, though poisonings from accidental ingestion happen in the U.S. as well. And chronic harms from pesticide residues on food, particularly among young children, have been documented in many cases.

U.S. pesticide residue limits on food (or "tolerances") are set by EPA, using a regulatory framework that currently fails to account for combined, cumulative or tragically timed effects. This puts all of us at risk of exposure to residues, but none so much as young children who are particularly vulnerable to the harmful effects of pesticides.

Learn more » In the United States, pesticides used on litchis include bee-harming imidacloprid and neurotoxic organophosphates. To learn more about pesticide residues on your food, visit WhatsOnMyFood.org.

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