

Minnesota mom rallies against pesticide drift

Jul 26, 2012 by Linda Wells



Bonnie Wirtz is a new mom living in Melrose, Minnesota. She and her husband moved there to start a farm and raise a family.

What they weren't planning on were the consequences of living in close proximity to frequent pesticide application. After one alarming incident of pesticide drift that put Bonnie in the hospital, this Minnesota mom took up the battle cry against pesticides and how they can harm [children's health](#).

Bonnie was already health-conscious. As a member of a local holistic mom's group, she tried to stay up to date on the best practices for keeping her developing baby boy Jayden healthy and safe. She and her husband switched to organic foods when Bonnie was pregnant, and choose organic produce for their son whenever they can to protect him from [pesticide residues](#).

The drift incident left Bonnie feeling frustrated:

Through this event, I realized that even through the air we breathe we can be exposed to these chemicals on a routine basis — no matter where we live. It is horrifying to realize that others can expose my child to chemicals and there is little I can do to stop them.

The most intense episode of pesticide exposure happened last month, while Bonnie was at home with Jayden. [Chlorpyrifos](#) was being aerially applied to a nearby alfalfa field, and drifted into the Wirtz home through the air conditioner.

Bonnie's physical reaction was severe. She immediately had trouble breathing and her heart began racing almost to the point of cardiac arrest. Bonnie was rushed to the hospital, where the health professionals were concerned but unsurprised. Bonnie was told by a nurse practitioner that she was

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not the first to come in with similar reactions.

High stakes for Jayden

The chemical, chlorpyrifos, is a [known brain toxicant](#) linked to learning disabilities in children. EPA recently announced [new regulations](#) focused on protecting people from exposure to chlorpyrifos, but many groups say that the measures [don't go far enough](#) in protecting people who work and live near the fields.

Bonnie is now working with her moms' group to educate others about the many ways kids are exposed to pesticides, beyond just food residues. She says that many of her friends are wondering why their children have more allergies and asthma, why miscarriage and birth defect rates seem to be going up.

It's my hope that if more people understand that the food they are eating, and that is being produced around them, is affecting their health and the health of the ones they love, it will motivate them to speak out for better food policy and chemical policy.

Bonnie has also joined [a new statewide coalition](#) in Minnesota focused on fighting [pesticide drift](#). We'll keep you posted as the coalition's important efforts move ahead.

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