

EPA, stop downplaying the atrazine/cancer link

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It's been more than two years since EPA's Scientific Advisory Panel reprimanded the agency for lowballing the cancer risks of atrazine — including risks of childhood cancer. Now EPA is finally taking another look at this [widely used herbicide](#).

Atrazine is found in most of our drinking water — about 94%, according to government sampling. And this month, EPA officials start taking another look at the health and environmental harms of Syngenta's flagship herbicide. With exposure so widespread, it's hugely important that they get it right.

[Atrazine](#) is the second most widely used pesticide in the United States. In addition to being a possible carcinogen, it is an endocrine disruptor known to contaminate groundwater. In fact, in 2003 it was banned in the European Union because of "unpreventable" groundwater contamination.

However, in the U.S., EPA greenlighted the herbicide for continued widespread use that same month.

Some advice from EPA's own scientists

The scientists responsible for providing independent scientific advice to EPA — the Scientific Advisory Panel (SAP) — raised red flags about the EPA's findings, saying the cancer links were under-represented. While EPA asserts that atrazine is "not likely to be a human carcinogen," the SAP's independent assessment came to a different conclusion: the evidence is "suggestive" of a link between atrazine and certain cancers (like ovarian cancer, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, hairy-cell leukemia and thyroid cancer).

"Suggestive." "Strong association." These are the words EPA's own scientists used to describe the links between cancer and atrazine, and they're hardly comforting referencing a chemical [millions of Americans](#) — particularly in the Midwest — are exposed to in their drinking water. This, on top of atrazine's known [endocrine-disrupting properties](#), its [reproductive effects](#) and its impacts on [amphibians](#). So why hasn't EPA done more to protect us from atrazine?

Corporate shenanigans

Syngenta, atrazine's manufacturer and one of the "[Big 6](#)" global pesticide corporations, has a well-earned reputation for going to remarkable lengths to defend atrazine, one of its most profitable products.

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In the last EPA review of the herbicide, Syngenta held [50 closed-door meetings](#) with the agency. And in the years since then, they've [added more tactics](#) to their repertoire. Faced with a class-action suit over atrazine's contamination of drinking water, Syngenta hired private detectives to investigate EPA scientists and added "third party experts" to the company payroll to publicly defend atrazine.

EPA: Get it right this time

As EPA's review of atrazine begins, we know that we can expect more of the same from Syngenta. But with a new set of recommendations from its scientific advisors, EPA has an obligation to do better this time around.

The body of evidence detailing the harmful effects of atrazine has only grown since EPA's last review. And the stakes are high for communities that face the highest atrazine exposures: rural Midwesterners, farmers and their families, and farmworkers. Atrazine needs a rigorous, independent review — free from Syngenta's influence.

[Take action »](#) Please join us in urging EPA to take the current review of atrazine seriously and follow the science — wherever it may lead. If atrazine may cause cancer, in addition to other lifelong harms, EPA needs to take swift action to protect public health.

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