

Children's Health Conversation Guide



Let's make protecting kids from pesticides a national priority.

One conversation at a time.

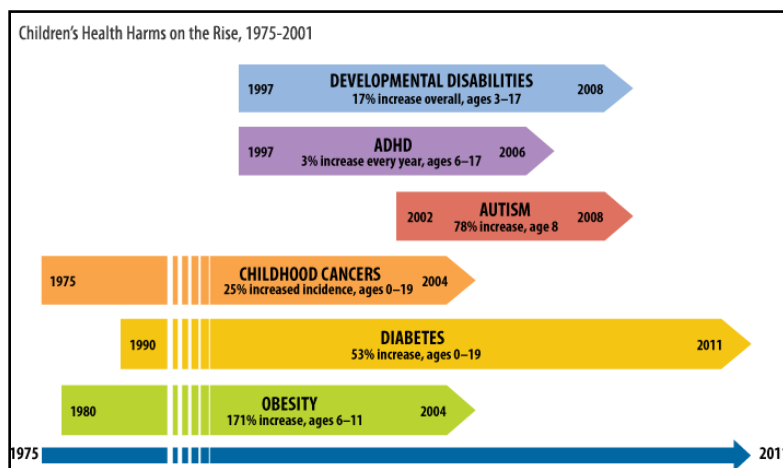
Children today are sicker than they were a generation ago, and pesticides are a part of the reason why. From childhood cancers to birth defects and asthma, a wide range of childhood diseases and disorders are on the rise, and public health experts tell us we have a "silent pandemic" of learning disabilities and disorders. But we can break the silence by starting conversations in our communities about the importance of protecting kids from the harms of pesticide exposure.

Some facts and findings to get you started...

Scientists at Pesticide Action Network reviewed over 200 recent studies to produce *A Generation in Jeopardy*, a report highlighting what's known about how pesticides are harming children's health. Overall, a growing body of evidence points to pesticide exposure as a significant contributor to many childhood health harms. Here are some of our key findings:

1. For perhaps the first time in history, children today are less healthy than their parents.

- **Childhood cancer:** More than 10,000 children are diagnosed with cancer each year. Leukemia and childhood brain tumor incidence are up 40% and 50% respectively since 1975.
- **Learning disabilities & disorders.** 400,00 to 600,000 of the 4 million U.S. children born each year are affected by some kind of developmental disability.
- **Autism:** One in 88 children are likely to be on the autism spectrum, with the odds even higher among boys. Autism rates are up more than 250% for boys and over 375% for girls since 1997.
- **Asthma:** More than 7 million U.S. children are now affected by asthma, up from an estimated 2 million in 1980.



For a full list of sources, see the report *A Generation in Jeopardy*.

2. Emerging science indicates that pesticides may be contributing to the current epidemic of childhood asthma, obesity and diabetes.

- Exposure to pesticides in the first year of life can significantly increase the risk of being diagnosed with asthma by age five.

Download *A Generation in Jeopardy: How pesticides are undermining our children's health & intelligence*, and PAN's new *Healthy Kids!* toolkit at www.panna.org/kids.



Making children's health a national policy priority



3. Evidence of pesticides harming the brain and nervous system is particularly strong. Many recent studies link exposure to pesticides — even at very low levels — with increased risk of ADHD, autism, and drops in IQ levels. Studies also show strong links between pesticide exposure and certain childhood cancers.

- A mother's exposure to pesticides during pregnancy has been linked to lower IQ and weaker working memory for her child. And children who have higher levels of pesticide breakdown products in their urine — at the low levels commonly found from food residues — are more likely to be diagnosed with ADHD.
- Exposure to herbicides and household insecticides during pregnancy can increase risk of childhood leukemia and brain cancer. Kids who grow up in agricultural areas are more likely to have childhood cancers.



4. Scientists have long known that children are particularly susceptible to environmental harms; timing of exposure is critically important.

- Quickly growing bodies take in more of everything. An infant takes in about 15 times more water than an adult per pound of body weight, and up to age 12, a child inhales roughly twice as much air.
- Using MRI technology, researchers found changes in the brain structure of infants who had been exposed to the insecticide chlorpyrifos in the womb. Areas of the brain related to attention, language, emotions and control were all affected.

Practical policy interventions:

It's time to make a solid start for our children a national priority. While individual household choices can help, protecting kids from the health harms of pesticides requires real policy change.

The best way to protect children from the harms of pesticides is to dramatically reduce use nationwide. This would not only limit children's exposure, it would also lower pesticide levels in the bodies of men and women of childbearing age — protecting current and future generations in one fell swoop.

Household food and pest control choices can make a real difference, but this is not a problem we can shop our way out of. Policy changes are needed. State and federal agencies need better tools to take action on pesticides that harm children; farmers need encouragement and support for stepping off the pesticide treadmill; and pesticide-free zones are needed around schools, daycare centers and in rural neighborhoods. Working together, we can make these changes happen.



Visit www.panna.org/kids to learn more about how pesticides are harming children's health, what communities across the country are doing, and how you can help.