



School Pesticide Monitor

A Bi-Monthly Bulletin on Pesticides and Alternatives
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FDA Continues to Allow Toxic Lice Shampoo

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has denied a 2010 petition filed by the National Resources Defense Council (NRDC) and Pesticide Action Network North America (PAN) to ban the insecticide lindane, which is harmful to human health and ineffective in controlling lice and scabies. Pressure had been mounting on FDA to halt the pharmaceutical use of lindane as, in addition to this petition, Congressman Edward J. Markey (D-Mass.), senior member of the Energy and Commerce Committee, asked FDA to stop the pharmaceutical use of

lindane this past summer. Because of FDA's decision, lindane is still an active ingredient in pharmaceutical insecticide products such as lice



Despite lindane's known dangers, FDA continues to approve its use as an ingredient in shampoos and lotions to control lice and scabies.

shampoos and lotions. Lindane was formerly used in agricultural insecticides until it was banned by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for use on crops in 2006. FDA regulates pharmaceuticals that contain insecticides and pesticides, such as triclosan, that are in cosmetics.

The dangers of lindane are well documented. Lindane is an organochlorine class pesticide, similar in structure to DDT, and a known neurotoxicant and endocrine disruptor. In addition to being a carcinogen, perhaps the most startling health effect associated with the use of lin-

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Report Finds Children at Risk from Pesticides in Maine

The public health and environmental non-profit, Toxics Action Center (TAC) released a report in December that surveys pesticide use on public school grounds across the state of Maine and urges policy change to stop spraying. The report, "A Call for Safer School Grounds: A Survey of Pesticide Use on K-12 Public School Grounds in Maine," is based on a survey of 209 Maine public schools and shows that 51% of schools sur-

veyed spray pesticides, many of which have been linked to human health impacts, including kidney disease and links to non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma. The report finds that the state's Integrated Pest Management Policy (IPM) is inadequate in regulating pesticide application and informing the public on pesticide practices. Although IPM policies and records of pesticide applications are required to be kept by schools under Maine law, 32%

of schools report that they do not keep records. TAC received IPM records from 9% of schools surveyed.

"Maine children are at risk from pesticide spraying in schools," said Tracie Konopinski, Community Organizer with TAC, "[In November,] the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) published a report calling for reduced pesticide exposure for children. There are numerous stud-

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Lice

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dane is seizures in young children and adults at doses of 1.6 and 45 grams, respectively. Children are clearly more sensitive to the use of this product. That should come as no surprise after a recent report from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) concluded, "Children encounter pesticides daily and have unique susceptibilities to their potential toxicity." Children are often the ones treated with these chemicals since they are more susceptible to lice than adults. Lindane has been classified by EPA as a class B2/C possible human carcinogen, based on liver and lung tumors in mice. The chemical has been linked to reproductive problems in mice, such as adverse fetal development and body weight. It is also slightly estrogenic to female rodents, and causes the testes of male rats to become atrophied.

The use of lindane can also be harmful to the environment. Lindane is

moderately toxic to bird species and pollinators, and is highly persistent in most soils. The chemical moves quickly through soils and water, posing a significant risk of groundwater contamination. A recent study by Elizabeth H. Humphreys and several colleges published in *Environmental Health Perspectives* found that California's successful ban on lindane led to cleaner drinking water. According to this study, since the ban on lindane was enacted, levels in waste-water treatment facilities have decreased to almost undetectable levels.

In addition to the human and environmental health risks that lindane presents, it is also ineffective at controlling lice and scabies. Over time, lice and scabies have become resistant to lindane. Results of a recent study from the Miami School of Medicine reveal that even amongst five other harmful chemical head lice shampoo treatments, the lindane-based shampoo was the least effective product. Another Belgium

study declared that lindane-based products are "not sufficiently effective to justify their use."

Beyond Pesticides advocates for the use of non- and least-toxic methods to control for head lice, as these methods have been proven to be both safer and more effective. One of the safest methods to combat lice is to coat one's hair with oil and carefully pick through the hair with a nit comb. Remember to place the lice in hot soapy water after they have been removed from the hair. Another method is to use hot air, which desiccates the insects and eggs, ultimately killing them. A recent study from the University of Utah found this method outperformed insecticidal shampoos at killing adult lice and their eggs.

For additional information on controlling head lice without toxic chemicals, see Beyond Pesticides' Head Lice Factsheets, *Getting Nit Picky About Head Lice* at: <http://bit.ly/LeastToxicPestMgmt>.

Maine

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ies cited within the AAP's report that link chronic pesticide exposure to pediatric cancers and neurobehavioral and cognitive deficits like autism, attention disorders, and hyperactivity. Our report shows that despite policies aimed at reducing pesticide spraying, more than half of K-12 public schools polled in our report still have their finger on the pesticide trigger."

State Representative Mary Nelson (D-Falmouth), who supports these recommendations, said, "We need strong action that puts us on a faster track to reducing human ex-

posure to pesticides. I call on my colleagues in the Maine House and Senate to follow the lead of communities like Scarborough and limit the use of pesticides at schools and day care centers in order to protect children's health and promote safe schools."

In 2011, a bill was introduced in the Maine state legislature to ban pesticides on school grounds. Ultimately, the bill was amended to continue to rely on a loosely defined IPM program, require development of Best Management Practices (BMPs) and direct the Maine Board of Pesticides Control to assess compliance with current IPM regula-

tions. Unfortunately, as the report points out, the implementation of both the IPM and BMP at Maine schools often fall short of what the law requires. Recent amendments to Maine's school pesticide regulations introduced back in September would even further weaken the state's IPM standards if adopted. However, several Maine communities, including Camden and Scarborough, have taken matters into their own hands and passed policies on the municipal level to curb the use of synthetic pesticides on town-owned land.

The report is available at: <http://www.toxicsaction.org>.