

Overview

To Find Articles Pertaining to Pesticides
and Specific Disease Effects

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The *Pesticide-Induced Diseases Database*, launched by Beyond Pesticides, facilitates access to epidemiologic and laboratory studies based on real-world exposure scenarios that link public health effects to pesticides. The scientific literature documents elevated rates of chronic diseases among people exposed to pesticides, with increasing numbers of studies associated with both specific illnesses and a range of illnesses. With some of these diseases at very high and, perhaps, epidemic proportions, there is an urgent need for public policy at all levels –local, state, and national—to end dependency on toxic pesticides, replacing them with carefully defined green strategies. The common diseases affecting the public’s health are all too well-known in the 21st century: [asthma](#), [autism and learning disabilities](#), [birth defects](#) and [reproductive dysfunction](#), [diabetes](#), [Parkinson’s](#) and [Alzheimer’s](#) diseases, and several types of [cancer](#). Their connection to pesticide exposure continues to strengthen despite efforts to restrict individual chemical exposure or mitigate chemical risks, using risk assessment-based policy.

The current database, which contains over 3,000 studies, is updated on a weekly basis with published scientific literature. **We urge readers to send studies to info@beyondpesticides.org that you think should be added to the database.**

Data Supports Policy Change

The database is a tool to support efforts to eliminate the continued use of hazardous pesticides in favor of green strategies that emphasize non-toxic and least-toxic alternative practices and products. The studies in the database show that our current approach to restricting pesticide use through risk assessment-based mitigation measures is not working. This failed human experiment must be ended. The warnings of those who have expressed concerns about risk assessment, such as EPA Administrator under Presidents Nixon and Reagan, William Ruckelshaus, have been borne out by three decades of use and study. Mr. Ruckelshaus in 1984 said, “We should remember that risk assessment data can be like the captured spy: If you torture it long enough, it will tell you anything you want to know.” EPA’s risk assessment fails to look at chemical mixtures, synergistic effects, certain health endpoints (such as endocrine disruption), disproportionate effects to vulnerable population groups, and regular noncompliance with product label directions. These deficiencies contribute to its severe limitations in defining real world poisoning, as captured by epidemiologic studies in the database.

An enlightened policy approach to proposed or continued toxic chemical use, in an age where the adverse effects have been widely and increasingly documented, is to first ask whether there is a less toxic way of achieving the toxic chemical’s intended purpose. Simply, “Is there another practice that would make the substance unnecessary?” This approach does not preclude and should demand the prohibition of high hazard chemical use, those chemicals that are simply too dangerous.

The alternatives assessment approach differs most dramatically from a risk assessment-based policy in rejecting uses and exposures deemed acceptable under risk assessment calculations, but unnecessary because of the availability of safer alternatives. For example, in agriculture, where the

database shows clear links to pesticide use and cancer, it would no longer be possible to use hazardous pesticides, as it is with risk assessment-based policy, when there are clearly effective organic systems with competitive yields that, in fact, outperform chemical-intensive agriculture in drought years. Cost comparisons must take into account externalities such as water pollution and water utility expenses, associated with chemical-intensive farming. The same is true for home and garden pesticide use and defined integrated pest management systems with prescribed practices and only specific substances as a last resort.

The database suggests clearly that we must take strategic action to shift away from pesticide dependency. Public policy must advance this shift, rather than continue to allow unnecessary reliance on pesticides. Regulatory restrictions must be tied to alternatives assessment that move chemicals off the market or prohibit their marketing as safer approaches and technologies emerge.

*For more information download and print this [article](#) from *Pesticides and You*, which summarizes the database, as well as the database [press release](#).*