

What is pesticide drift?

Anytime a pesticide is used, some portion of the chemical “drifts” away from the intended application site and into neighboring areas.

Depending on the chemical, the application method, and weather conditions, pesticides may drift hundreds or even thousands of feet from the application site. Pesticide residues can drift while being applied, and they can drift over the hours and days following an application as the chemicals volatilize into the air.

Drifting pesticides are poisonous. They may damage crops or trees, sicken or kill animals, or damage the health of people living, working, or traveling near an application site.

Symptoms of exposure

Patients who’ve been exposed to pesticides often display non-specific symptoms that mirror common conditions. Drift victims may report poisoning symptoms almost immediately, such as burning skin and eyes, sore throat, difficulty breathing, headache or dizziness, nausea or vomiting.

Pesticide exposure may also increase patients’ risk for long-term health conditions such as asthma, fatigue or depression, increased chemical sensitivity, neurological impairments, infertility, miscarriage or birth defects, and some cancers.

Advice to sprayed patients

- ▶ Eliminate all contact with pesticides. Remove all contaminated clothing, store it in a sealed bag and keep away from the sun. Shower and shampoo right away in clean water. Flush eyes with an eyewash or with clean water.
- ▶ If experiencing symptoms, contact a physician or NC Poison Control, at 1-800-222-1222
- ▶ Report the incident to the NC Pesticide Section.
- ▶ Keep track of all related information.

Assisting drift-affected patients

- ▶ Ask about the patient’s environmental and occupational history.
- ▶ Questions that may help with farmworker patients:
 - Were the fields wet when you were picking?
¿Estaban mojados los campos cuando estaba recogiendo?
 - ▶ Was any spraying going on while you were working in the fields? *¿Se estaba asperjando mientras usted estaba trabajando en el campo?*
 - ▶ Was there spraying going on nearby? What crops were being cultivated there? *¿Estaban asperjando en fildes o campos cercanos? ¿De que son los fildes cercano?*
 - ▶ Did you experience any strange smells, sights or tastes in the fields? *¿Sintio algun olor o sabor extraño en cuanto trabajaba en el campo? ¿Vio algo extraño?*
 - ▶ Do you get sick during or after working in the fields? *¿Se enferma durante el tiempo en ue esta trabajando en el campo o después?*
 - ▶ What pesticides were being used? *¿Sabe Usted cuales esticides fueron usados?*
 - ▶ If pesticide is un-known: What crops were you picking? *¿Que estabas recogiendo?*



Family members can be affected

Families of farmworkers may also be harmed by pesticides brought home from the fields. It is important to ask families the following:

- ▶ Does the timing of your symptoms have any relationship to any family member’s arrival from work or hobby?
¿Existe alguna relación entre el momento que dan inicio sus síntomas y la hora que llega algun familiar del trabajo o de un pasatiempo?
- ▶ Has any other household member or nearby neighbor suffered similar health problems? *¿Ha sufrido algún otro miembro del hogar o vecino cercano de problemas de salud similares?*

If pesticide exposure is confirmed or suspected, ask the patient and/or his or her employer for a **product label** and **Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS)**, both of which will be helpful in assessing and treating the patient. The employer or pesticide applicator is required by law to have copies of labels and MSDSs on hand.

Source for pesticide-related questions: Recognition and Management of Pesticide Poisoning, Reigart & Roberts, US EPA 1998.

Report pesticide violations

- ▶ All pesticide drift incidents or other spray violations should be reported to the NC Pesticide Section at (919) 733-3556.
- ▶ Report pesticide drift, or any pesticide violation that occurs on the job or in housing provided or arranged by an employer, to the NC Department of Labor, Agricultural Safety and Health Bureau at (919) 807-2926.

Both enforcing agencies have Spanish-speaking staff on call, and will address all complaints, regardless of the legal status of the caller. Complaints can be also be made anonymously or by a third party.

Call the Pesticide Drift hotline at 1-877-NO SPRAY for assistance in English or Spanish

Many Pesticides are Neurotoxicants

Exposure to pesticides can have both short-term and long-term impacts on human health, even in small doses.



Free help is available

Free sources for assistance for people injured by pesticides include the following:

▶ You and/or your patient can call the **Pesticide Drift Hotline** at **1-877-NO-SPRAY** for assistance. The hotline, operated by the non-profit ARC/PESTed, provides information and assistance free of charge, in English or Spanish, and regardless of the caller's legal status in the United States.

▶ For assistance with related legal concerns, patients can call **Legal Aid NC's** Raleigh office at 919-828-4647. All Legal Aid staff can speak both Spanish and English.

Resources for more information

▶ *Recognition and Management of Pesticide Poisoning*, Reigart & Roberts, 1998. EPA's quick reference manual for physicians is available in English and Spanish at <<http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/safety/healthcare/handbook/handbook.htm>>, or 703-305-7666.

▶ The National Pesticide Information Center (NPIC) is an online resource for health service providers. Their toll-free phone number has a toxicologist on-call every day at 1-800-858-7378. <<http://www.npic.orst.edu>>

▶ Pesticide Action Network's *Pesticides Database* Search for pesticides by product or chemical names, poisoning symptoms, crop, region, and more. <<http://www.pesticideinfo.org>>.

▶ EPA's *Integrated Risk Information System (IRIS)* Search exposure symptoms from various environmental contaminants. <<http://www.epa.gov/ngispgm3/iris>>.

▶ *ToxFAQs* are fact sheets on hazardous chemicals, including pesticides, excerpted from The Agency for Toxic Substances & Disease Registry (ARTSDR)'s Toxicological Profiles and Public Health Statements. <<http://atsdr1.atsdr.cdc.gov:8080/toxfaq.html>>.

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ARC/PestEd is a non-profit organization that advocates for alternatives to toxic pesticides in North Carolina by empowering people to make sound decisions about their health and environment.

Pesticide Drift

A Guide for Health Service Providers



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**Pesticide Drift Hotline/ Línea de Asistencia
1-877- NO SPRAY**