



BOARD OF HEALTH

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Johnson County Board of Health Position Statement On Pesticide Use

Johnson County Board of Health (JCBOH) supports the overall reduction of pesticide use on common turf for cosmetic purposes, such as playgrounds, schools, and other public areas. Pesticides are poisons designed to kill weeds, rodents, insects, and fungi. Many commonly used pesticides contain neurotoxins that attack and disable portions of the nervous system and the brain, not just in pests, but in humans as well. The health specific outcomes of pesticide exposure vary, but chronic exposure can lead to cancer, birth defects, reproductive harm, and disruption of the endocrine system. These effects vary especially when considering dose and timing, however, the evidence suggests that exposure to pesticides, especially children's exposure, should be limited as much as possible.

Individuals most vulnerable to the effects of pesticides are those in hormonally sensitive windows, such as children, adolescents undergoing puberty, pregnant women, and individuals of childbearing age. Children are at heightened risk due to their ongoing growth and increase susceptibility of their developing nervous system, endocrine system, and brains to environmental toxins. Pesticides can accumulate in body tissues over time, and even moderate exposures have been linked to learning, behavioral, and developmental disabilities.

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, residues on food are the primary source of exposure of pesticides for children. These pesticides can drift, contaminating where we work, live, and play.

- Acute pesticide exposure from common areas can cause headaches, nausea, dizziness, etc.
- Pesticide drift can settle on surfaces in schools for days
- Children exposed to high levels of pesticides have an elevated odds of developing ADHD and ASD
- Children are disproportionately affected by pesticide exposure due to skin-surface-area-to-body weight ratio and frequent hand-to-mouth behavior

A community where all can achieve optimal health.

Although this position statement directly addresses the overall reduction of pesticides in common public area, as an agricultural state, Iowa is in a challenging situation. More than 80% of the pesticides used are on the over 30 million acres used for crop production. Drifted pesticides can impact the over 250,000 Iowans with private wells. 30% of Iowa schools are directly adjacent to a farm field and 90 % are within drift radius of a field. The link between agricultural pesticide exposure and cancers such as leukemia, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, and pancreatic cancer is especially concerning in Iowa, which has the second highest cancer incidence rate in the U.S.

Although the JCBOH strongly recommends the reduction of the overall use of pesticides, the Board of Health is especially focused on use for cosmetic purposes in areas frequently used by children, to safeguard their health and overall well-being. Protecting children, the most vulnerable population for pesticide exposure, is crucial and can be achieved by promoting the adoption of healthy and sustainable farming practices. Investing in such practices not only ensures a safer environment for our youth, but also contributes to the long-term health and sustainability of our agricultural systems. By implementing these strategies, we can create a healthier future for our children and the overall health of our communities.