

# Pesticide

# info

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT PESTICIDES

## What is a pesticide?

Pesticides are unique among toxic substances. Most environmental toxins are an unwanted by-product of another process (for example, outflow from a manufacturing plant or emissions from an automobile engine). Pesticides are chemicals designed to be harmful to a target pest and purposely introduced into the environment to do their job of managing insects, bacteria, weeds, rodents, or other pests.

Farmers use pesticides to control the pests that can destroy or damage food and other crops. Health agencies use pesticides to combat insects and other organisms known to carry disease (like West Nile virus). Hospitals use disinfecting pesticides to destroy viruses and other "germs" on floors and equipment. Many of us use pesticides to control pests in our homes and gardens.

Because most pesticides are designed to be toxic to their target pest—and because any substance can be harmful if used improperly—pesticide use is strictly controlled. The Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) protects human health and the environment by regulating pesticide sales and use and by

fostering reduced-risk pest management. Pesticides must be registered with both the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and DPR before they can be sold or used in California. DPR will not allow any pesticide to be registered unless it determines it can be used safely. DPR's strict oversight also includes environmental monitoring, residue testing of fresh produce, licensing of pesticide professionals, strict rules to protect workers and consumers, and local use enforcement administered by the county agricultural commissioners.

While pesticides can be useful, they can also harm people, animals or the environment if misused or used

indiscriminately. That is why the most desirable pest control is to prevent pests in the first place. If that doesn't work and you choose to use pesticides, use the least-toxic product available and make sure to follow the label directions carefully.

### What is a pesticide?

People often think pesticide means *insecticide*. Pesticide refers to not only insecticides but many other kinds of chemicals. Under state and federal law, a pesticide is any substance intended to control, destroy, repel, or attract a pest.



#### California Department of Pesticide Regulation

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P.O. Box 4015  
Sacramento, CA 95812-4015  
916-445-4300  
[www.cdpr.ca.gov](http://www.cdpr.ca.gov)

#### BRANCHES

**Enforcement**  
916-324-4100

**Northern Regional Office**  
916-376-8960

**Central Regional Office**  
559-297-3511

**Southern Regional Office**  
714-279-7690

**Environmental Monitoring**  
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916-324-1350

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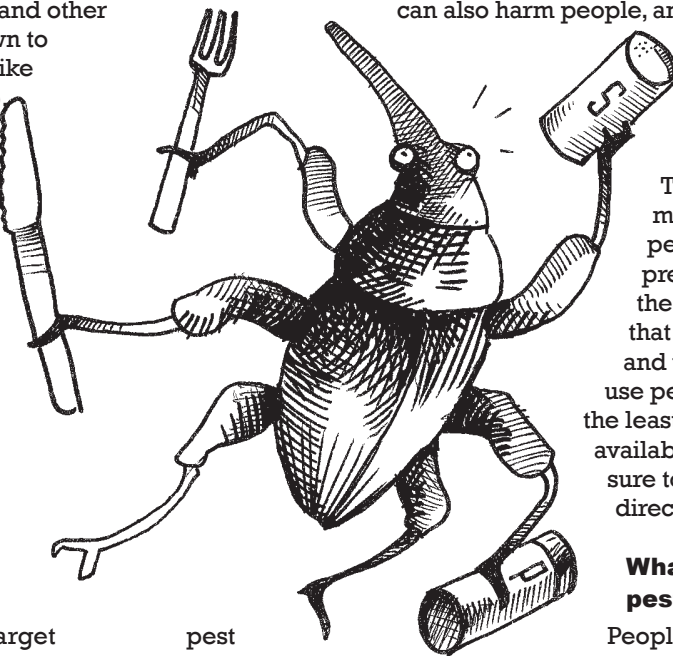
**Personnel**  
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**Pest Management  
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**Pesticide Registration**  
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**Some common pesticides include**

- Insecticides
- Herbicides
- Rodenticides
- Repellents
- Disinfectants
- Fungicides
- Wood preservatives
- Pheromones
- Attractants
- Plant growth regulators



Single copies of this handout are available by calling your County Agricultural Commissioner's office, from DPR at 916-445-3974, or can be downloaded from DPR's Web site, [www.cdpr.ca.gov](http://www.cdpr.ca.gov), "Consumer Fact Sheets."

California also regulates adjuvants as pesticides. This class of chemicals is exempt from federal licensing but must be registered in California. Adjuvants are emulsifiers, spreaders, and other compounds added to improve the effectiveness of a pesticide.

**What is a pest?**

Any living organism that causes damage or economic loss or transmits or produces disease may be the target pest. Pests can be animals (like insects or mice), unwanted plants (weeds), or microorganisms (like plant diseases, bacteria and viruses).

**Do household products contain pesticides?**

Many household products are pesticides, including cockroach sprays, mosquito repellents, rat baits, kitchen and bath disinfectants, products that kill mold and mildew and many lawn-and-garden and swimming pool chemicals.

**What about pest control devices?**

State law requires specific types of pest control devices to be registered by DPR. The devices that require registration are those that control wood-destroying insects including termites, carpenter ants and powder post beetles. Devices are defined as "any method, instrument, or contrivance intended to be used to prevent, eliminate, destroy, repel, attract, or mitigate any wood-destroying pest."

Exempt from registration are devices that claim to control wood-decaying fungi, general household pests such as cockroaches, and vertebrate pests such as rats and mice.

Pesticides, equipment used to apply pesticides, and firearms are not considered devices.

**Are consumer products treated with pesticides regulated?**

Many products, ranging from toothbrushes to children's toys, are treated with antimicrobial pesticides to get rid of bacteria. The pesticides are usually added to the product during manufacture (for example, plastic shower curtains), but may be added afterwards (for example, mixing a mold-preventing pesticide into paint).

If a treated product makes public health claims—that is, it claims to "fight germs," or "control fungus"—the article must be registered as a pesticide. If no public

health claims are made, the product is exempt from federal or state regulation.

In either instance, the product label must make clear that the benefits of pesticide treatment do not extend beyond the article itself. Products like sponges or cutting boards, used in the kitchen or other areas where disease-causing organisms may be present, can give the false impression that the treated article provides extended protection against food-borne and disease-causing bacteria. Therefore, the law requires that the label make clear the treatment is to protect the article, not to prevent infection of people or animals with bacteria or other microbes.

**What substances are not regulated as pesticides?**

California's definition of pesticides is broad, but does have some exclusions:

- Over-the-counter and prescription treatments for head lice, which are regulated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.
- Cosmetics and similar products (including antibacterial soaps and lotions, and antifungal creams) intended to be applied to the human body.
- Fertilizers, nutrients and other substances used to promote plant survival and health.
- Biological control agents, except for certain microorganisms. (Biological control agents include beneficial predators such as birds or ladybugs that eat insect pests.)
- Certain products which contain low-risk ingredients, such as garlic and cedar. (California exemptions differ from those at the federal level. For more information, go to [www.cdpr.ca.gov](http://www.cdpr.ca.gov), click on "A-Z Index," then, "Section 25b - Exempted pesticide products.")

**Want more information?**

Go to DPR's Web site, [www.cdpr.ca.gov](http://www.cdpr.ca.gov).

**Pesticide Complaint?**

**1-87PestLine**  
INFORMATION LINE

1-877-378-5463



# 10 SAFETY TIPS FOR USING PESTICIDES AT HOME

## PROTECT YOURSELF AND YOUR FAMILY

### DO



Always read the label and follow the directions every time you use a pesticide around the house or for landscaping.



Wear personal protective equipment (like gloves, goggles or long-sleeved shirts) as directed by the label.



Keep pesticides out of reach of children, and dispose of pesticides according to the label.



Wash your hands after handling pesticides to avoid food contamination.



Store pesticides, including sanitizers/disinfectants, in labeled containers, if not using the original container.

### DON'T



Do not allow children and pets into recently treated areas until the product fully dries or dust settles.



Never use more than what is allowed on the label to ensure safe use.



Don't store pesticides – including bleach – in food or beverage containers.



Never mix different cleaning products together, especially with bleach.



Don't over-chlorinate swimming pools or spas. Ensure chlorine levels are never more than 4 ppm for pools or 5 ppm for spas when occupied.

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## Read the label first!

The most valuable time spent in pest control is the time you take to read the pesticide label. Labels tell you:

- How to *use* a product so it works like it should and doesn't hurt you, anyone else, or the environment.
- How to *store* the product safely.
- How to give first aid.
- Where to call for help or more information.

Label information helps you get maximum benefits from the pesticide at minimum risk. Reading the label saves money! It helps you buy the right product, buy the right amount for your needs, and use the right amount for the job.

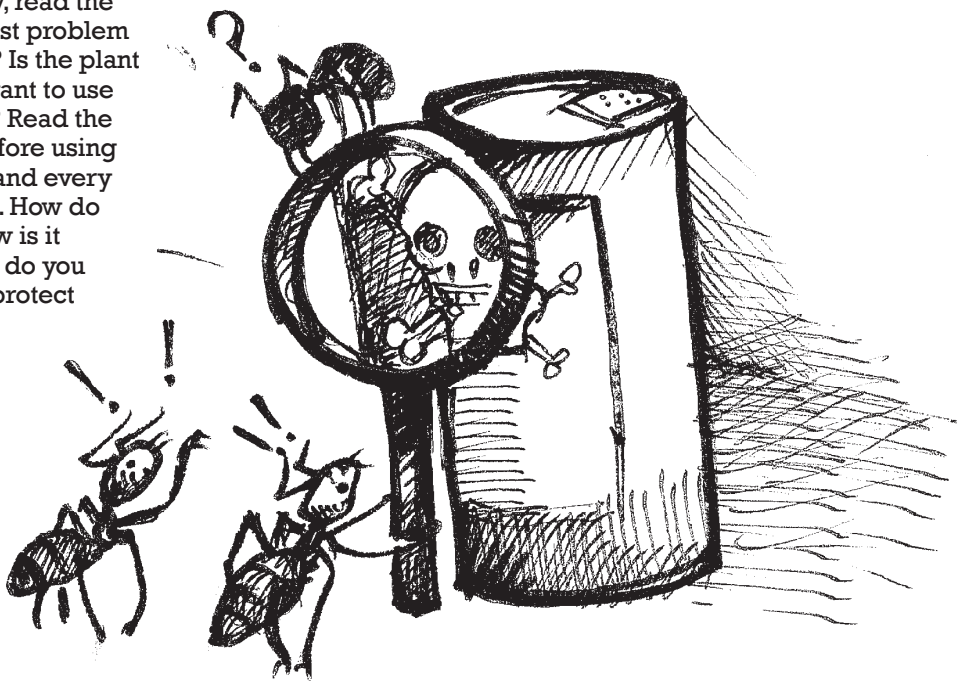
Before you buy, read the label. Is the pest problem you have on it? Is the plant or place you want to use it on the label? Read the label again before using the pesticide, and every time you use it. How do you mix it? How is it applied? What do you need to do to protect yourself and others?

Take time to look at the whole label. Don't trust your memory. Label

instructions can change. Using pesticides contrary to the label is illegal, may make the product ineffective and, even worse, dangerous. A pesticide product label includes:

### Common name and brand name

Some pesticides have "**common names**" that are easier to recognize than chemical names. For instance, carbaryl is the common name for the compound whose chemical name is 1-naphthyl N-methylcarbamate. Common names are generic and non-proprietary. Several companies may sell products with the same active ingredient using different "**brand names**"; the labels will have the same chemical or common name.







## **LABELS TELL YOU:**

**How to use a product safely and effectively.**

**How to store the product safely.**

**First aid instructions.**

**Phone numbers to call for help or more information.**



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or can be downloaded  
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"Consumer Fact Sheets."

## **Ingredients**

The "**active ingredient**" is the part of the product that kills or inhibits the target pest. The label must list the active ingredient (either the chemical or common name) and give the percentage by weight. "**Inert ingredients**," also called "**other ingredients**," are intentionally included in the product but not for their effect on the pest. They include solvents, emulsifiers, wetting agents and diluting substances. They are not necessarily chemically inert, and may have toxic properties. Inert ingredients do not need to be specified but their percentage must be listed.

## **EPA registration number**

This number tells you that U.S. EPA has reviewed the product and found it can be used without risk if you follow the directions on the label properly. Don't buy or use any pesticide product that doesn't have an EPA registration number.

## **Signal words**

Labels use three signal words, **Danger**, **Warning**, or **Caution**, to show a product's potential for making you sick if it isn't used correctly.

"**Caution**" appears on products that are least harmful to you.

"**Warning**" means a product is more harmful than one with a "Caution" label.

"**Danger**" means a product is poisonous or corrosive and should be used with extreme care.

Whatever the signal word, always follow the label instructions. Any substance—whether a pesticide, household cleaner, or over-the-counter medication—can be dangerous if not used correctly.

## **Precautionary statements**

Besides the signal word, pay close attention to any warnings in the "**Precautionary statements**."

This section tells you about special precautions you should take. For example, you may need to wear long sleeves and pants, gloves, goggles, or other protective clothing and equipment. This is where you also find any extra protections needed for children or pets.

Pesticides can be useful but wrong or careless use can cause environmental damage. The label lists several ways to protect the environment. Follow these instructions to avoid harming beneficial insects (for example, bees), damaging nearby desirable plants, or polluting

ground or surface water (with irrigation runoff or drift from treated areas).

## **First aid**

If swallowing or inhaling the product or getting it in your eyes or on your skin could be harmful, the label will give you first aid instructions. The instructions are not a substitute for medical advice or treatment. **ALWAYS** call a doctor or a Poison Control Center (1-800-222-1222) for advice if you think pesticides made someone sick. When you call, try to have the pesticide container with you.

Most labels do say what the symptoms of pesticide illness are. To get this information, call the National Pesticide Information Center (1-800-858-7378) or your regional Poison Control Center (1-800-222-1222).

## **Directions for use**

This section tells you how to use the pesticide. You should make sure the pest you are trying to control is listed. This is your assurance that you are not wasting time and money on something that won't work. This section also tells you how much to use, and where, how and when you should apply the product. Always read and follow label directions. Be sure the pesticide is the right one for your pest problem—then use only the amount needed and no more.

## **Storage and disposal**

Look here to find out how to store and dispose of leftover pesticide and empty containers safely. State or local laws may be stricter than federal requirements on the label. If you can't finish using a pesticide, check with your local solid waste management authority, environmental health department or county agricultural commissioner to find out if your community has a household hazardous waste collection program. You can also call 1-800-CLEANUP or go to [www.cleanup.org](http://www.cleanup.org) for this information. Get the county agricultural commissioner's phone number in your local white pages under county government headings, or by calling 1-877-378-5463 (1-87PestLine). You can also get the commissioner's number on DPR's Web site, [www.cdpr.ca.gov](http://www.cdpr.ca.gov), and find more tips and information on safe pesticide use.

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