



Needham Health Department

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SPRING ALERT

A Public Health Message From The Needham Board Of Health

The Needham Health Department recommends that homeowners learn the facts about pesticides and seek to reduce or eliminate pesticide use in their yards and homes.

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), all pesticides are harmful to some degree. The commonplace, widespread use of pesticides is both a major environmental problem and a public health issue. And most pesticides - despite having an EPA registration - have not been adequately tested to determine all their effects on people or the environment.

Overall, children may be the most vulnerable to the harmful effects of pesticides due to a variety of physiologic and age-related factors. The American Public Health Association warns that even a single exposure during a critical period of development could cause acute or long-term health problems. In the last few years, the EPA has phased out the registration of certain pesticides because of their potential impact on children's health and on the environment. Herbicides, insecticides, fungicides, and "Weed and Feed"-type products are all examples of pesticides. Scientific studies potentially link exposure to common lawn care pesticides with an increased risk of several types of cancer, neurological and respiratory diseases, endocrine disruption and birth defects.

As of December 31, 2001 the EPA cancelled the sale of chlopyrifos (Lorsban, Dursban) for home lawn, indoor crack and crevice treatments and some termiticide uses. Other uses of this pesticide will be phased out over the next few years. Diazinon will no longer be sold for indoor use as of December 31, 2002. Its use for residential lawn and turf applications will be phased out by December 31, 2004. In addition to reducing unnecessary exposures to children, these efforts should improve urban river and stream quality and reduce the risk to birds and aquatic life.

The Town of Needham has developed an integrated pest management (IPM) policy to assure that all town departments, boards and commissions with oversight of buildings, parks and fields adhere to IPM principals and use, only if necessary, the smallest amount of the least toxic chemical to control pests and weeds.

Still, the greatest environmental source of pesticides contamination and exposure to children in Needham may be from residents' own yards and lawns and the runoff from excessive or inappropriate use. When purchasing pesticides for use around your home ask about alternative safer products. This year, ask your lawn specialist about the products they are currently using and whether safer alternatives are available.

To learn more about how you can reduce your reliance on pesticides and introduce organic turf control policies into your home, contact the Needham Health Department or check out the following web sites:

MA Dept of Food and Agriculture Pesticide Bureau-<http://www.state.ma.us/dfa/>
The US Environmental Protection Agency- <http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/>
The IPM Institute of North America- <http://www.ipminstitute.org/>