



Pesticides: Safe Handling

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION FACT SHEET • FSIPM002E

If you choose to use pesticides in your IPM approach, you should know the following.

- Pesticides are chemicals used in and around the home to control pests, such as insects, weeds, fungi, rodents, and germs.
- Bleach, liquid soap, furniture polish, and antifreeze are examples of household chemicals which have hazards similar to pesticides; some are quite dangerous, while others are much less harmful.
- SIGNAL WORDS and PRECAUTIONARY STATEMENTS on labels of all household chemicals indicate product hazards and how to handle them safely.
- You can use the checklist in this guide for handling pesticides and all other household chemicals.

Transporting Pesticides

Prevent Accidents

- Bag pesticides separate from groceries.
- Protect bottles by wrapping them in paper to reduce the chance of breakage if they fall over or crash together.
- Secure containers upright to make sure containers cannot fall or be knocked over.
- Transport in trunk of car, away from people and groceries.

Storing Pesticides

Ensure Human and Pet Safety

- Store product in such a manner as to eliminate access by children and pets. Pets can knock products off shelves. Children can ingest them.
- Store pesticides 4 feet off the ground, preferably in a locked and labeled cabinet.
- Never put pesticides in soft-drink bottles or other containers. Store them in their original containers with labels that list ingredients, directions for use, and treatment in case of accidental poisoning.
- Apply transparent tape over the label to keep it legible.
- Never store pesticides with food or medical supplies.
- Keep your pesticide storage area dry and well-ventilated.
- Check pesticide containers periodically for leaks, corrosion, breaks, tears, or rust. If container is broken, take it to your local household hazardous waste collection site.

Apply Pesticides Safely

Follow the Label and Use Precautions

- Make sure the pest you are targeting for control is really causing the problem. Double-check the pesticide label to verify the product will control that pest.
- Choose the right pesticide and always follow label directions when applying pesticides (see Pesticides: Learning about Labels, FSIPM001). The label lists the sites where you can legally apply the pesticide, what protective clothing you must wear, how to mix the pesticide, and other important information.
- Wear the protective clothing the label requires to minimize exposure during mixing, applying, and cleaning up. Protective clothing and equipment examples: long sleeves, long pants, waterproof gloves, and protective eyewear.
- Mix only the amount you need to do the job. Mix outdoors or in a well-ventilated area.
- Keep children and pets out of the area where pesticides are being mixed and out of application area until spray is dry or dust has settled.
- Calibrate your sprayer so you are certain that you apply the correct amount.
- Never spray or apply dusts outdoors on a windy day.
- Never eat, drink, or smoke when using pesticides. You could easily transfer traces of the pesticide from hand to mouth.
- Use a pesticide indoors only if the label specifically states it can be used inside the home. Remove food, dishes, pots and pans from the

room before treating kitchen cabinets. Pay close attention to reentry and ventilation instructions.

- ❑ Wash hands well with soap and water after handling pesticides; residues on hands easily transfer to food, children, cigarettes, etc.
- ❑ Avoid wearing soft contact lenses when handling pesticides, as they may trap material.

Wear the Right Clothing

Protect Yourself

- ❑ At a minimum, wear long pants, long-sleeved shirt, and rubber gloves to reduce your exposure. Read the label under “Hazards to Humans and Domestic Animals” and wear the listed protective clothing and equipment.
- ❑ Do not wash clothing used during pesticide application with family laundry. Wash clothing separately using hot water and a heavy duty detergent.

Safe Disposal

Pesticides and Pesticide Containers

- ❑ Avoid disposal problems! Purchase only what you need.
- ❑ Never flush unused pesticides down the toilet, sink, or storm drain. Improper disposal can harm aquatic plants and wildlife.
- ❑ Do not put pesticide product directly into the garbage. Dispose of unused pesticide by using it as the label directs or find someone who will use it.
- ❑ If a pesticide is not usable, contact your county health office regarding their disposal policies and programs. Most counties have household hazardous waste collection programs.
- ❑ Triple rinse empty plastic and metal pesticide containers. Fill empty containers 1/4 full of water, cover tightly, shake, and then add the rinse water to the spray tank; repeat three times. Dispose of container with your household waste or as directed on the label.
- ❑ Thoroughly shake or pat paper containers to remove as much pesticide as possible. Use this material. Dispose of paper containers with normal household waste.
- ❑ Never reuse empty pesticide containers.
- ❑ Never attempt to burn pesticide containers in the fireplace, woodstove, or burn barrel. Do not put containers in trash compactors.

Pesticide Spills

Personal Safety First

- ❑ Know what is spilled to be aware of your exposure. At a minimum, wear gloves when cleaning up spills.
- ❑ If a spill occurs, clean it up promptly. Do not leave the spill unattended. If help is necessary, send someone else.
- ❑ Don't wash a spill away—runoff can damage nontarget plants or pollute surface and groundwater.

Sprinkle spills with sawdust or kitty litter, sweep the mixture into a plastic garbage bag and dispose of as stated in the “Safe Disposal” section for unusable pesticide product.

- ❑ If you spill pesticide on yourself, wash it off immediately with soap and water, or as the label instructs.

First Aid

Tips to Know

- ❑ Do basic first aid and get medical help immediately! Check the label for first aid information.
- ❑ If pesticide spills on your skin, wash the area with soap and water.
- ❑ Remove and discard contaminated clothing.
- ❑ When a pesticide gets into the eyes, flush the eye slowly and gently with water for 10 to 15 minutes.
- ❑ When someone inhales pesticide vapor, move the individual to fresh air. If person is not breathing, give artificial respiration.
- ❑ Give a conscious person water or milk if he or she has swallowed a pesticide. Read the pesticide label to find out if you should induce vomiting.



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Use pesticides with care. Apply them only to plants, animals, or sites listed on the label. When mixing and applying pesticides, follow all label precautions to protect yourself and others around you. It is a violation of the law to disregard label directions. If pesticides are spilled on skin or clothing, remove clothing and wash skin thoroughly. Store pesticides in their original containers and keep them out of the reach of children, pets, and livestock.

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