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Kids are at risk. What's the hold up?



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Kristin Schafer



Something's rotten in Denmark. Well, in DC actually. That's where the decision's been made — again and again and again — to keep a nasty insecticide called chlorpyrifos on the market. The result? A generation of kids is sicker and less smart.

I'm truly not being melodramatic, though I admit the story of chlorpyrifos does make me hopping mad. I'm particularly riled at the moment because EPA is taking another look at this pesticide, and is *once again overlooking known dangers* to children's health and developing minds. What's up with that?

More than a decade ago, products containing chlorpyrifos were banned for home use because the science so strongly linked the chemical to children's nervous system harms. This ban was a very good thing.

But use in agricultural fields continued, to the tune of 8-10 million pounds a year. Each farming season, children in rural areas are breathing the chemical as it drifts into their homes, daycare centers and schools. And children everywhere consume chlorpyrifos residue on their conventionally produced grapes, apples, peaches and more.

When researchers from the Centers for Disease Control study chemicals in Americans' bodies, they find breakdown products of chlorpyrifos in more than 90% of those sampled — and the highest levels are found in children 6-12 years of age. And sometimes above "levels of concern," according to EPA's own safety standards.

Meanwhile, more and more scientific studies have found that prenatal and early childhood exposure to this organophosphate can cause serious harm to the development and workings of children's brains. One study used MRI imaging technology to link doses of chlorpyrifos *in utero* to irreversible changes in the brain architecture. Not good.

Children deserve better

There's an interesting moment in our public conversation right now, with attention being paid to how healthy early environments can help young children succeed. President Obama's recent call for universal early childhood education puts this front and center.

The president also called for a new project to better understand the workings of the human brain — a fascinating idea. And in my mind, the story of chlorpyrifos neatly links these two ideas. We know that exposure to this chemical (and others like it) can seriously hamper the development and function of our children's brains.

This is hardly giving kids the strong start they deserve. We know enough, and it's time for action.

Add your voice to the swell » Please sign PAN's petition urging EPA not to overlook the strong science showing the dangers of chlorpyrifos to children's health. The time to protect our kids from this nasty insecticide is long overdue.

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