

## What Is A Pesticide?

A pesticide is any agent used to prevent, repel, or eliminate pests.

- Pests can include unwanted plants or weeds, insects, animals or rodents, fungi, and microorganisms such as bacteria or viruses.
- The term “pesticides” refers not only to insecticides, but also to herbicides, fungicides, rodenticides, disinfectants, and other kinds of pest-controlling chemicals, including many household products.

**Pesticides are commonly used to:**

- Control undesirable insects or diseases on food and flower crops.
- Clear unwanted vegetation along roadsides.
- Control undesirable weeds and shrubs on private property.
- Eliminate plants that compete with trees grown for lumber.

**Signs of possible herbicide use in plants:**

- Wilted, drooping, or burnt-looking leaves.
- Patches of dead or deformed-looking plants.
- A pinkish tint on plants, which is the residue of a dye added to herbicides before spraying. This dye lasts only a few days, depending on sun exposure and will disperse completely with a little rain.



**Basketweavers, and those who use baskets, need to know about pesticide use because...**

- Preparing basket materials for weaving involves peeling the bark from the shoots or roots with the teeth, increasing risk of ingesting pesticide residues.
- Weavers also use their teeth as a third hand and chew the ends of sticks as they are added.
- Baskets are used for cooking, eating, wearing as caps and regalia, and as baby carriers and rattles. A basket should not be used for any of these purposes if it might have been made from plants having pesticide residues. Pesticide residues can remain in plant material for a year or more.

**Those who gather plants or animals from the forest should know about pesticide use too because...**

- Basket material gatherers can unknowingly gather in areas that were sprayed within the last year.
- Acorns, berries, mushrooms, and other plants used for food and medicine that are sprayed with pesticides can retain harmful pesticide residues.
- Pesticides can get into creeks and contaminate drinking water and fish that are harvested for food. Roadside applications can run off into roadside ditches that flow to streams and can contaminate down-stream (riparian) plants and aquatic species.
- Some pesticides can concentrate in the body tissues and organs of deer, fish, small mammals, and birds.

## Pesticide Exposure... What Are The Health Risks?

Pesticides, by their nature, are toxic. Short-term exposure to pesticides can cause irritation to skin, eyes, and the respiratory system. They are also thought to have an association with diseases such as cancer, diabetes, asthma, and reproductive and behavioral problems in people and other animals.

**Symptoms related to pesticide exposure:**

- Headache
- Dizziness
- Itchy, burning eyes
- Sore throat
- Red, itchy rash on skin
- Tingling or swelling of skin
- Difficulty breathing
- Nausea, vomiting
- Abdominal pain, diarrhea

**Pesticide illness is often unreported because symptoms mimic flu**

**Pesticide Exposure Safety Precautions and First Aid:**

- Use latex gloves to remove contaminated clothing or to touch contaminated skin.
- Place contaminated clothing and shoes in a bag and wash separately from other family laundry.
- Avoid inhalation of dust and other particles from clothing.
- Clean areas where contaminated shoes have been.
- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water. If needed, shower with soap and shampoo hair to remove chemicals from skin and hair. Clean under fingernails and in folds of skin.
- If symptoms persist, contact your doctor, and let the doctor know what and where you have been gathering.

## Alternatives To Pesticides

There are many environmentally friendly options available to prevent or eliminate pests.

- In and around the home, you can exclude pests by caulking cracks, installing mesh wire at foundation vents, and keeping kitchens and other parts of the home free from food sources that attract pests. Use low-toxicity, contained baits instead of spraying potent toxics in your home and environment.
- On private property, heavy mulching or hand weeding and filling the space with desirable plants are strategies that may be used to control weeds.
- On roadsides, mowing has proven to be an effective management tool in Humboldt and Mendocino Counties, where CalTrans is committed to non-chemical roadside vegetation management.
- In timber areas, manual thinning, selective logging, and noxious weed removal can be performed instead of herbicide spraying.
- From small backyard gardens to large-scale commercial agriculture, beneficial insects and less toxic insecticides such as soaps, oils, and Biopesticides can control pests. Ask about these products at your local nursery.
- In meadows or oak woodlands, controlled burning helps to eliminate invasive plants and promotes the healthy growth of native plants. Due to the risks associated with fire, no one should attempt a controlled burn without adequate training. When using fire to manage land, proper permits must be obtained. Local fire safety councils should also be contacted.

## FIND OUT MORE BY CONTACTING:

### Californians for Alternatives to Toxics

(707) 834-4833

[www.alt2tox.org](http://www.alt2tox.org)

### National Pesticide Information Center

1(800) 858-7278

<http://npic.orst.edu>

### California Poison Control System at UC San Diego Medical Center

(691) 497-8500

[calpoisen.org](http://calpoisen.org)

### San Diego Indian Health Center

(619) 234-2158

[www.sdaihc.org](http://www.sdaihc.org)

### Riverside-San Bernardino County Indian Health

(909) 864-1097

[https://www.rsbcih.org](http://www.rsbcih.org)

### Indian Health Council, Inc.

#### Rincon Reservation

(760) 749-1410

[www.indianhealth.com](http://www.indianhealth.com)

### Tribal Pesticides Program Council (TPPC)

(928) 523-8897

[www.tppcwebsite.org](http://www.tppcwebsite.org)

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SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

# PESTICIDES...



...What  
Basketweavers  
Should Know