

## **Pesticide Safety That Every Homeowner Should Know**

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The majority of calls that we receive have to do with the control of pests. There are times that a pesticide needs to be used but our recommendations tend to be pesticides that are not harsh such as insecticidal soap or horticultural oil. There are even times that the use of a chemical control can be more of a risk (due to the possible exposure) than the presence of the actual pest. The best protection from possible medical problems in the future is to have zero exposure to any pesticide. The term "pesticide" is broad and includes both insecticides and herbicides, just to name two! Zero exposure is not only important for the applicator but also any children or pets that may come into contact with the pesticide before it has dried.

Pesticide safety is extremely important! If the directions on the label are followed both the applicator and the environment will be protected. Once again, if chemical pesticides are not used at all that is the ultimate protection against human (or pet) exposure and damage to the environment but, that is not always possible. The following items are on the General Standards test that all Restricted Use Pesticide Applicators must pass to become licensed. It is great information for every homeowner who applies pesticides to learn too!

- \* The signal word - DANGER, WARNING, or CAUTION indicates how acutely toxic the product is to humans.
- \* Immediately following the statements about acute, delayed and allergic effects, the labeling usually lists personal protective equipment requirements. These statements tell you the minimum personal protective equipment that you must wear when using the pesticide.
- \* **THE LABEL IS THE LAW!** It is illegal to use a pesticide in any way not permitted by the labeling.
- \* A pesticide may only be used on the plants, animals, or sites (such as indoor vs. outdoor) named in the directions for use!!
- \* You may **NOT** use higher dosages, higher concentrations, or more frequent applications than what is listed on the label.
- \* You must follow all directions for use, including directions concerning safety, mixing, diluting, storage and disposal.
- \* **READ THE LABEL** before; you buy the product, you use the product and before you dispose of the container.
- \* You must wear the specified personal protective equipment even though you may only be risking your own safety by not wearing it.

\*Evidence indicates that about 97% of all body exposure that happens during pesticide spraying is by contact with the skin - with the hands and forearms receiving the most exposure. So, wear those long sleeve shirts and rubber gloves!

\*Be sure to wear rubber gloves before you even get the container off of the shelf to begin mixing.

\* Before taking your gloves off after spraying, be sure to wash the gloves with soap and water. Then, after taking off the gloves, wash your hands again with soap and water.

\* Never carry pesticides in the passenger section of your car, van or truck.

\* If the labeling lists a range of possible amounts, use the least amount of pesticide that will achieve good control of the pest.

Naturally, if we can all use “softer” pesticides everyone and everything would benefit. For example, research in California showed that residues of Malathion & Sevin found on normally weathered foliage outdoors can kill newly exposed lady bug adults for up to 2 weeks after application - Versus - dried residues of insecticidal soap or horticultural oils had no effect on the lady bugs 1 hour after treatment! If and when chemical pesticides are used, try to use the least toxic pesticide, spot treat the infested area and remember, the label is the law!