



## Tips for Parents: ADHD Linked to Pesticides

*A recent study published in Pediatrics showed a higher incidence of ADHD among children with higher levels of pesticide and insecticide traces in their urine. The study looked at over 1000 children.*

### **Does this mean pesticides cause ADHD?**

At this time, that's not what the study is saying. A number of different things have been linked to ADHD:

- Genes. 1/3 of fathers that had ADHD as children will have a child with ADHD.
- Exposure to lead before age 6.
- Prenatal exposure to alcohol or tobacco in the womb.

What the research is saying is that pesticides may contribute to ADHD, especially higher levels. More research is needed to find out exactly which pesticides could be responsible and what levels might be considered risky or dangerous.

### **What kinds of pesticides were linked to ADHD?**

This study looked specifically at a group of 40 pesticides and insecticides called organophosphates. Organophosphates have also been implicated in other diseases of the nervous system.

### **Where/How does pesticide exposure occur?**

Pesticide use is widespread and most people have some levels of it in their bodies. It is sprayed on most commercially grown food products, unless they are labeled organic. These pesticides can wash off into waterways and contaminate drinking water, can be breathed in if sprayed nearby, and can stay in the soil after a crop is harvested.

Most people are exposed the most to pesticides and insecticides through their food. The foods listed below are considered "The Dirty Dozen." This means that they are typically the most contaminated if they are not labeled organic.

1. Apples
2. Cherries
3. Imported Grapes
4. Nectarines
5. Peaches
6. Pears
7. Raspberries
8. Strawberries

9. Bell Peppers
10. Celery
11. Potatoes
12. Spinach

### **Should I stop feeding my kids these foods?**

Experts say that these fruits and vegetables offer so much nutrition that you should continue to feed them to your family. However, they recommend that you take these steps to reduce exposure to pesticides on the foods listed above as well as all other fruits and veggies:

1. Buy organic. The number one thing you can do to protect your family is to buy organic produce—especially organic versions of The Dirty Dozen mentioned above. Organic foods are not treated with organophosphate pesticides.
2. Buy at a farmers' market. Many local farmers that sell at farmers' markets avoid using pesticides. Since the food is produced in smaller amounts and locally, the pesticide level is typically lower. Still, it's a good idea to ask to make sure.
3. Wash and peel. If you can't find organic versions of these foods, or simply can't afford them, you should wash them very thoroughly. You can buy produce wash at most supermarkets. In addition, peel items that have an outer skin, such as apples and peaches.
4. Grow them yourself. If you have a spot of land or even a sunny patio, you can grow at least a few of these things yourself. Strawberries and bell peppers are easy to grow. Ask your local garden or nursery for more information.

### **Talk to Your Doctor**

If you are concerned about your child developing ADHD, or suspect your child may already have it, discuss your concerns with your child's doctor.

### ***For more information:***

#### **Where can I read more about pesticides and ADHD?**

You can read the [study published in Pediatrics](#) by following [this link](#).

If you'd prefer something easier to read, try these articles:

[New Study Finds ADHD Linked to Pesticide Exposure](#)  
[ADHD in Children: Pesticides may be Missing Link](#)