

EXPOSURE HISTORY

Acute pesticide injury is often misdiagnosed because it frequently mimics other illnesses. Acute pesticide injury may cause or exacerbate such illnesses as pneumonia or other respiratory infections, asthma, gastroenteritis, heat stroke, brain hemorrhages, epilepsy, meningitis, septic shock and other conditions. Failure to take a thorough exposure history may also cause chronic pesticide toxicity to go unrecognized.



EXPOSURE HISTORY INTERVIEW FOR PEDIATRIC PATIENTS

Ask the following questions of parent or guardian:

- ❖ Could the patient's health problems be related to the home, daycare, school, or other location?
- ❖ Has there been any exposure to pesticides in your home or garden or to pesticides used on your pet (e.g., bug or weed killers, lice shampoo, flea and tick sprays, pet collars, powders, or shampoos, indoor pesticide sprays or strips, or foggers)?
- ❖ Are pets or other animals in or near your home sick?
- ❖ Are children allowed to play in areas treated with pesticides? How soon after the application?
- ❖ Where do you apply the pesticides?
- ❖ Where are the pesticides stored?
- ❖ Is the child's home near an industry or business that uses chemicals?

- ❖ Does the child's drinking water come from a well? If so, is it tested at least once per year?
- ❖ Has there been recent construction where the child lives, goes to school, or plays?
- ❖ What kind of work do the parents or other household members engage in? (See Exposure History Interview for Adults below)

EXPOSURE HISTORY INTERVIEW FOR ADULT PATIENTS

Occupational Exposures

- ❖ What is your occupation?
- ❖ How long have you been doing this job?
- ❖ Describe your work and the hazards to which you are exposed to (e.g., pesticides).
- ❖ Under what circumstances do you use protective equipment (e.g., work clothes, safety glasses, respirator, and gloves)?
- ❖ List previous jobs in chronological order, include full and part-time, temporary, second jobs, summer jobs, and military experience. To take a shorter history, only ask for all current and past jobs that involved pesticide exposure.



Non-occupational Exposures

- ❖ Does anyone in the family have a hobby where they may have worked with hazardous materials that they might have brought home (i.e., pesticides)? If yes, inquire about household members potentially exposed.

Environmental Exposures

- ❖ Are pesticides used in your home or garden or on your pet (e.g., bug or weed killers, flea and tick sprays, collars, powders, or shampoos)?
- ❖ Are pets or other animals in or near your home sick?
- ❖ Do you live near industry or a business that uses chemicals?
- ❖ Does your drinking water come from a well? If so, is it tested at least once per year?
- ❖ Has there been recent construction where you live or work?

If pesticides are used:

- ❖ What is the name of the product(s) you use?
- ❖ Is a licensed pesticide applicator involved?
- ❖ How often do you or your service providers apply pesticides? When was the last application?
- ❖ Where do you apply the pesticides?
- ❖ Are children allowed to play in areas treated with pesticides? How soon after the application?
- ❖ Where are the pesticides stored?



- ❖ Do you purchase conventionally grown or organic food? If conventional food, do you wash raw fruits and vegetables?
- ❖ Do you or did you ever live near a facility that could have contaminated the surrounding site (e.g., mine, plant, smelter, or dumpsite)?
- ❖ Have you ever changed your residence because of a health problem?
- ❖ Does your drinking water come from a private well, city water supply, and/or grocery store?
- ❖ Have you recently acquired new furniture or carpet, or remodeled your home?

Symptoms and Medical Conditions

- ❖ Does the timing of your symptoms have any relationship to your work hours?
- ❖ Has anyone else at work suffered the same or similar problems?
- ❖ Does the timing of your symptoms have any relationship to environmental questions listed above?
- ❖ Has any other household member or nearby neighbor suffered similar health problems?

References

National Environmental Education and Training Foundation (2003). "Competency Guidelines for Medical and Nursing Education." A Project of the National Strategies for Health Care Providers: Pesticides Initiatives. Available online at <http://www.neetf.org/health/PestEd.pdf>.

Reigart, JR and Roberts, JR (1999). "Recognition and Management of Pesticide Poisonings, Fifth Ed." U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, EPA 735-R-98-003. Available online at <http://www.epa.gov/oppfead1/safety/healthcare/handbook/handbook.htm>.

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