

Guide to Pesticide Safety

in Mexico

You have rights in Mexico that help protect you from pesticides.

Foreign workers and workers without a valid permit have the same protections as Mexican workers.

What are pesticides?

Pesticides are chemicals used to kill bugs, weeds, and other pests.

Pesticides can make you sick or kill you.

Pesticides can be anywhere on farms and in forests, nurseries, and greenhouses.

Pesticides can be in:

- plants, dirt or irrigation water;
- farm or irrigation equipment;
- places where pesticides are stored or have been stored;
- places where pesticides are loaded, mixed, or thrown away;
- cars or trucks that carry pesticides;
- gear and equipment used to apply, mix, or handle pesticides.

What do pesticides look like?

Pesticides come in different shapes, sizes, and forms.

Pesticides can look like:

- a liquid that is sprayed or poured on plants and soil;
- a powder put on plants and soil;
- little pebbles, pellets, or grain;
- a gas or fog that is sprayed, let go, or injected into plants and soil.



I don't know anything about pesticides. Should someone teach me about them at work?

Your employer is responsible for teaching you, or for hiring someone to teach you and any fellow workers coming into contact with pesticides, about:

- the risks to your health and that other workers coming in contact with pesticides;
- the labels that must appear on pesticide containers and how to use them. All label information must be in Spanish.

If you have any questions, your employer or the person in charge of pesticide training must explain anything you don't understand. Ask if you're not sure.

If you have any questions about pesticides, you can call these offices:

Toxicology Information Service of the Mexican Association of the Phytosanitary Industry (Servicio de Información Toxicológica de la Asociación Mexicana de la Industria Fitosanitaria, SINTOX).
Toll free: 01-800-009-2800

General Department of Labor Health and Safety (Dirección General de Seguridad y Salud en el Trabajo)
Valencia 36, Col. Insurgentes Mixcoac, Benito Juárez, C.P. 03920, México, D.F.
Tel.: (55) 5563-0500

Are all pesticides the same?

No. Each pesticide is different. Containers must have labels telling you about that particular pesticide.

How are pesticides classified?

Pesticides are classified by how dangerous they are. Labels come in different colors:

- Red** - extremely toxic
- Yellow** - highly toxic
- Blue** - moderately toxic
- Green** - slightly toxic

Can people under the age of 18 and pregnant or lactating women use pesticides?

No. No one under age 18 or who is pregnant or lactating may come into contact with pesticides.

- For more information, see *Guide to Child Labor Laws in Mexico* and *Women's Guide to Work and Pregnancy in Mexico*.



Pesticides are very dangerous. They can make you very sick or even kill you.

- Never spray them on your skin, on your bed or in your house.
- Never use empty containers to drink water or keep things in.

What do I do if I am harmed by pesticides?

If you think pesticides have harmed you, then go to a doctor right away.

Pesticides can harm you if you get them on your skin, get them in your eyes, swallow them, or breathe them.

If pesticides get on your clothes

- Take off the clothes that have the pesticide on them.
- Get help right away.

If pesticides get on your skin

- Use water to rinse off the pesticide.
- Get help right away.



If you breathe pesticides

- Get away from the pesticides.
- Get fresh air.
- Get help right away.

If pesticides get in your eyes

- Hold your eyes open and rinse them with cool water for 15 minutes.
- Get help right away.

Also, take the pesticide label with you to the doctor if you can.

How can I take care of myself and not get sick because of pesticides?

- Never eat, drink or smoke if you are in contact with pesticides.
- Always use special work clothes like: gloves, goggles (protective eyewear), a waterproof hat, boots, long-sleeved clothes, and a mask to cover your nose and mouth. Your employer must provide you with all these things.

- Always wash with soap and water after coming into contact with pesticides. Your employer must provide you with these things.
- Always wash your work clothes before going home.

Who will give me work clothes?

Your employer must give you free work clothes if you are working with pesticides.

Do I have to take a bath after coming into contact with pesticides?

Yes. A proper bath with soap and water is the only thing that will get rid of pesticides. Never use water from irrigation channels, because it could be contaminated with pesticides.

What happens if I feel sick after coming into contact with pesticides?

Your employer must give you first aid and then take you to the nearest doctor.

Should there be medicines where I work?

Yes. Your employer must always have medicine in the workplace. If more than 100 people work for the same employer, there must be a doctor on-site.

What happens if someone in my family feels sick because of pesticides?

Your employer must also make sure they receive first aid and then take them to the nearest doctor.

Will I still get paid if I am in the hospital?

- Yes, and not only while you are in the hospital, but until you fully recover.
- If you have an on-the-job injury like pesticide poisoning, you are entitled to receive compensation. For more information see [Guide to On-the-Job Injuries in Mexico](#).

If I have problems at work or I get sick because of pesticides, who can I complain to?

- You should get free legal advice from the Federal Public Labor Defender's Office (Procuraduría de la Defensa del Trabajo).
- Here, a free labor lawyer will tell you if you need to go to the Conciliation and Arbitration Board (Junta de Conciliación y Arbitraje).
- For more information, see [Guide to Resolving Labor Disputes in Mexico](#).

Pesticides can hurt you years later

Pesticides can hurt you months or years after they get on your skin or in your eyes, mouth or lungs.

Pesticides can:

- Give you cancer
- Hurt your kidneys
- Hurt your liver
- Hurt your nervous system
- Cause birth defects in your children

How do I know if I have been harmed by pesticides?

Pesticides can be very dangerous, and they can harm you in many ways.

Pesticides harm both men and women.

Pesticides can:

- Hurt your nose
- Hurt your throat
- Hurt your eyes
- Cause rashes on your skin
- Cause your muscles to twitch
- Cause your urine to look cloudy
- Cause your nose to bleed
- Cause your body to shake
- Cause your stomach to hurt
- Cause permanent brain damage
- Cause problems with seeing
- Cause problems with thinking
- Give you a headache
- Give you muscle pains
- Give you cramps
- Give you blisters
- Give you ulcers
- Give you a heart attack
- Make you feel sick
- Make you sweat a lot
- Make you feel dizzy
- Make you drool
- Make you have trouble breathing
- Make it hard for you to speak
- Make you feel confused

There is not enough room in this guide to list all the ways that pesticides can hurt you!



**Protect yourself
at all times and
follow all safety
rules!**

You must always be careful when using pesticides.

Don't forget:

- Take a bath with clean water and soap after coming into contact with pesticides.
- Never use water from irrigation channels.
- Wash your work clothes.
- Never use empty pesticide containers for drinking water or to keep things in.
- Always listen to whatever experts say you must do to avoid getting sick because of pesticides.

Remember that your employer must:

- tell you about pesticides, how dangerous they are and how to use them;
- have medicine at the workplace and a doctor if more than 100 people are employed there;
- provide transportation for you or your family members to the closest doctor if you get sick from coming into contact with pesticides;
- provide you with proper work clothes.

Remember:

- You must never eat, smoke or drink if you are in contact with pesticides.
- Use proper work clothes.
- Get checked by a doctor.
- Wash your work clothes at the workplace.
- Take a bath with soap and water after coming into contact with pesticides.
- Go to all classes, courses and lessons about pesticides given by your employer.



Commission for Labor Cooperation