

Female Migratory and Seasonal Agricultural Workers: How Pesticides Can Affect You and Your Baby?

What is a Pesticide?

Pesticides are chemicals that help keep bugs and weeds away from crops. They help plants but can be harmful to people who work near them. Anyone working at a farm can be at risk, but especially if you are a female migratory and seasonal agricultural worker (MSAW) who is pregnant, breastfeeding, or plan to become pregnant, you must learn about the risks.



What are the Symptoms of Pesticide Poisoning?

Pesticides can enter your body through your skin, mouth, eyes, or when you breathe them in. If this happens, you may feel sick. Some common signs include:



- Headaches
- Elevated blood pressure
- Seizures



- Nausea (feeling like you need to throw up)
- Red eyes



- Coughing or sore throat
- Trouble breathing



- Feeling weak or tired
- Change in your heartbeat

How do Pesticides Affect Female MSAWs and Their Babies? Pregnant MSAWs who work around pesticides, insecticides, and herbicides can pass the chemicals to the baby through the placenta, breast milk, or when the baby touches contaminated clothes.

Pregnant MSAWs might:	Babies might:	Female MSAWs who are not currently pregnant might:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have a higher chance of losing the baby	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Be born too small• Have trouble breathing• Have body parts that do not develop completely• Have problems with brain development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have changes in their monthly period• Have trouble getting pregnant• Experience miscarriage

What steps should you take if you are pregnant or breastfeeding and work on a farm?

If you are pregnant or breastfeeding, it is important to protect yourself and others from pesticides. You should:



Wear long pants, long-sleeve shirts, gloves, boots, a hat, and a face mask.



Stay away from areas with pesticide warning signs that say "REI" (Restricted Entry Interval)



Wash your hands and any tools you use after work.

Change your clothes before going inside your house.



Take a shower and put on clean clothes.

Wash your work clothes separately with hot water and detergent.



Join training programs from community health workers or your local health department or health center to learn more about the effects of working with pesticides.

What can you do if you feel sick or think you are at risk?

What can you do if you feel sick or think you are at risk?

- If you have a pesticide poisoning emergency, call 911.
- See a doctor or nurse, especially if you are pregnant or feel sick.
- Contact Poison Control 1-800-222-1222, or visit the [online tool](#).
- Contact NCFH's Call for Health Helpline to help you find the nearest health center. Call toll free at 1(800) 377-9968 or send a message through WhatsApp at 1 (737) 999-4162. (available in English and Spanish).
- Tell your health care provider that you work on a farm.

Additional Patient Resources and Support:

[U.S. Environmental Protection Agency \(EPA\)](#)
[Citizen's Guide to Pest Control and Pesticide Safety](#)

[National Association of Environmental Medicine](#)
[Local Health Centers Contact Information](#)

Protect yourself and your baby by staying away from pesticides while pregnant or breastfeeding. If you can't stay away, you should take a bath and change clothes before being in contact with others.

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