

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 MSAWs who are pregnant, planning to become pregnant, breastfeeding, or around infants should be aware of specific 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 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.

MSAWs who are not currently pregnant might:	Pregnant MSAWs might:	Babies might:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have changes in their monthly period • Have fertility problems or trouble getting pregnant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience miscarriage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be born too early (premature birth) or very small • Have trouble breathing • Have body parts that do not develop completely • Have problems with brain development • Experience brain cancers and other delays during childhood • Have fertility problems in adulthood

What steps should you take if you are pregnant, breastfeeding, or caring for an infant and work on a farm?

If you are pregnant, breastfeeding, or caring for infants, 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, 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, feel sick, or notice illness or discomfort in your baby.
- 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 via WhatsApp at 1 (737) 999-4162. (available in English and Spanish).

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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