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Environmental toxins and health- the health impact of pesticides.

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Source

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Abstract

BACKGROUND:

Pesticides, including insecticides, herbicides and fungicides, are widely used in Australian agriculture. There is growing public concern about their impact on human health.

OBJECTIVE:

This article reviews the available evidence about the potential chronic health effects of pesticides, particularly relating to children and breastfeeding women, and discusses the potential role of organic food in decreasing risk.

DISCUSSION:

Exposure to pesticides can occur directly from occupational, agricultural and household use, and indirectly through the diet. Studies suggest that pesticides may be related to various diseases, including cancers, as well as having neurological, mental and reproductive effects. Children may be more susceptible to the effects of pesticides due to increased exposure via food and breast milk, underdeveloped detoxification pathways, and longer life expectancy in which to develop diseases with long latency periods. Some studies suggest that organic food consumption may lead to reduced pesticide exposure, however, there is a lack of direct evidence that organic food is a healthier option. Recommendations to minimise pesticide exposure include avoiding the use of pesticides at home or in the garden, limiting skin exposure to pesticides through the use of appropriate protective gear, and consuming organic food.

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