

TAKE 5

Pesticide-Exposed Clothing Decontamination

A 5-Minute Safety Training Aid

HS94-036F (11-24)

Household members too often get sick from pesticides, not from ingestion, but by wearing clothes washed with pesticide-contaminated work clothes. Children face greater risks due to their smaller size, faster metabolism, and developing bodies. Even small amounts of pesticides in the washing machine can cause serious problems for everyone.



Prevention

The best way to avoid pesticide contamination is prevention. Always:

- Use disposable personal protective equipment (PPE) when possible and dispose of it properly.
- Store, handle, and dispose of pesticides according to the label's instructions.
- Read all pesticide labels carefully and follow instructions exactly to ensure safety for you and your family.

Follow these additional steps to safely decontaminate clothing exposed to pesticides or herbicides.



Before Laundering

- **Wash contaminated clothes immediately.** Always wash contaminated clothing separately from the rest of the family's laundry. Never mix it with other clothes to avoid spreading pesticide residue.
- **Wear rubber gloves when handling contaminated clothing.** If any contaminated clothing touches your skin, wash the affected area immediately with soap and water.
- **Pre-treat clothing.** Pre-treat contaminated clothing with a high pH (alkaline) commercial laundry product to break down pesticide residues.
- **Dispose of severely contaminated clothing.** Do not attempt to wash clothing that has absorbed large

amounts of pesticides. Items like leather goods, such as belts, gloves, and boots, cannot decontaminate properly.

- **Shower thoroughly.**
Use soap and water to remove pesticide residues from your skin.
- **Change into clean, uncontaminated clothes.**
This helps reduce further exposure.

- **Use hot water.**
Use water that is at least 140°F (60°C) to break down the chemicals.
- **Wash in small loads.**
Fill the washer to no more than one-third of a full load to ensure thorough cleaning.
- **Use the longest wash cycle.**
Wash for at least 12-14 minutes to allow proper agitation and cleaning.
- **Increase detergent use.**
Use 1.5 times the normal amount of heavy-duty detergent to remove residues more effectively.



After Washing

- **Decontaminate the washing machine.**
After washing contaminated clothing, run an empty cycle with hot water and detergent to clean any pesticide residue left in the machine.
- **Dry contaminated clothing outside on a clothesline if possible.**
Fresh air and sunlight help break down pesticide residues further.

By following these guidelines, you can greatly reduce the risk of pesticide exposure for you and your family.



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