Toxic Pesticide Residues Found on Surfaces In Child Care Centers

A recent report from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) suggests that millions of children in child care centers are exposed to toxic pesticides that are still on surfaces from applications many years ago. This is the finding of a study of licensed centers done in the United States in 2001.

In the study, directors of selected centers provided information about the center, bug problems and maintenance routines. A technician collected one floor wipe and one surface wipe sample. Each wipe was from a place that was well-used by the children in each sampled room. The surface wipe was from a desk or tabletop. The technician also collected soil samples from multiple outdoor play locations into a sampling jar until the sampling jar was full. All the samples were tested for a set of specific chemicals known to be harmful to children: 13 synthetic pyrethroids and two pyrethrins (I and II), 22 organophosphate (OP) pesticides, one synergist (piperonyl butoxide) and one phenyl pyrazole (fipronil).

Pesticide contamination was common. Nearly a third (31%) of the centers had 3 to 4 pesticide residues detected in the floor wipe samples. Half of the centers had 3-4 pesticide residues detected in the surface wipe samples. Soil samples had pesticide residues in 38% of the centers. The directors of 75% of the centers reported at least one pesticide application in the last year.

The answers that the directors gave on the questionnaire did not predict the pesticide residue found on surfaces or potential exposure in the child care center. The directors did not know the extent of hazardous chemicals in their centers.

Environmental health experts recommend using Integrated Pest Management (IPM). With IPM, you reduce the use of pesticides to the minimum necessary to control unwanted pests. Strategies include closing openings where pests enter buildings, putting food in pest-resistant containers, and using substances that are disagreeable to pests but harmless to humans.

Do not rely on exterminators for expert advice on pest control unless they are certified users of IPM. For reliable advice about pest control and pesticides, contact your county office of the Pennsylvania State Extension Service. To locate your county office, go to http://www.extension.psu.edu/. Also, pest control advice is available from the National Coalition Against the Misuse of Pesticides at http://www.beyondpesticides.org/.

PA Child Abuse Regulations Updated

The Pennsylvania Child Protective Services Law changed in May 2007. Now, the child does not have to “come before” the mandated reporter. A mandated reporter is a person who comes in contact with children in a professional or work role. If the person has sufficient information about the child that creates a “reasonable cause to suspect” that the child is a victim of abuse, a report must be made. Another change is that in Family Day Care Homes, all individuals over 18 years of age who reside in the home at least 30 days in a calendar year are subject to background checks. Other parts of the law strengthen penalties and preventive measures.

Practitioners who have already completed the ECELS Child Abuse Self-Learning Module do not need to submit the module again. They only need to sign a document provided by a STARS manager to verify their understanding of the changes in the law. Look for the updated version of the Child Abuse and Neglect Self-Learning Module on the ECELS website.
Every Child in Pennsylvania Can and Should Have Health Insurance

No family earns too much to enroll their children in Pennsylvania's Child Health Insurance Plan - CHIP. For many families, CHIP is free. Families at higher income levels pay CHIP health insurance premiums on a sliding scale. The state contracts with private health insurance companies to operate the plan. CHIP pays for a wide range of medical, dental, special health care services and prescriptions. For information or to apply, call 800-986-KIDS (5437), or go to the user-friendly website at www.chipcoverspakistan.com.

Trustworthy Website Listings

Tufts University set up The Child & Family WebGuide at http://www.cfw.tufts.edu/. This unique collection of websites is for parents and for professionals who work with children. It is a good place to find safe sites for children to use too. Graduate students and faculty in child development have checked all the listed sites. Five main categories appear as headings across the top of the home page. These are family/parenting, education/learning, typical child development, health/mental health, and resources/recreation. In addition to listing sites by the five categories, the WebGuide links to information by age groups, special topics, research news, or sites where you can ask-an-expert. Explore this user-friendly WebGuide for your program and for your family.

Reminder: Check the Course Content before you sign up for Pediatric CPR and First Aid

In 2005, the national guidelines for adult, child and infant CPR changed. (See the January 2006 issue of Health Link Online for an article about the changes.) By now, you should expect the new guidelines to be part of first aid courses. Effective first aid training includes practice on a manikin, to master the skills for choke-saving and rescue-breathing. For infants and children, these skills are now identical to what you need to do for CPR.

Many organizations and individuals teach first aid. Before you arrange to take a pediatric first aid course, check that in your course you will:

• Use a manikin to practice skills that follow the 2005 CPR guidelines
• Cover all the first aid topics in Standard 1.027 of Caring for Our Children. You can look up this standard on the website of the National Center for Health and Safety in Child Care at http://nrc.uchsc.edu.

In Pennsylvania, ECELS facilitates teaching of the pediatric first aid course of the American Academy of Pediatrics, called Pediatric First Aid for Caregivers and Teachers or PedFACTs. The PedFACTs curriculum includes all the up-to-date pediatric first aid and CPR information and meets the requirements in Caring for Our Children. The student manual for PedFACTs includes instructions for all the first aid topics. The appendix of the manual has information on common childhood illnesses as well as a First Aid, Choking and CPR chart. The card for successful completion of the PedFACTs course indicates that the individual completed both pediatric first aid and one-person infant-child CPR. The card is valid for 2 years.

Staff and parents can practice CPR skills at their convenience with self-learning kits that cost just $35 from The American Heart Association. There are two versions of these reusable kits. Each kit includes an inflatable manikin and a video/DVD to teach CPR in a 20-25 minute course. One kit teaches adult/child CPR and the other teaches infant CPR. To learn more about these kits, you can call 877-AHA-4CPR or go to the American Heart Association website at www.cpranytime.org.