

Allergies, Asthma, Multiple Chemical Sensitivities and Pesticides

Pesticide industry-front groups, such as The Urban Pest Management Council of Canada, falsely claim that pesticides benefit allergy and asthma sufferers¹. This industry is in the business of selling pesticides; they do not provide medical treatment for those who get sick from exposure to their products. It is dangerous for pesticide companies to advise allergic and asthmatic individuals to use pesticides to control their symptoms because exposure to pesticides can, in fact, trigger allergic reactions and respiratory problems². Allergic disease is a serious health issue:

- approximately 2 million Canadians suffer from asthma³
- approximately 10% of Canadian children are asthmatic⁴
- the Lung Association estimates that, each year, about 500 Canadian adults and 20 Canadian children die from asthma attacks⁵
- approximately 1%-2% of Canadians live with the risk of an anaphylactic reaction and must carry EpiPens⁶
- approximately 12.6% of the population suffers from Multiple Chemical Sensitivities⁷
- respiratory diseases cost the Canadian health care system \$12.18 billion dollars per year⁸.

The **Canadian Asthma Consensus Guidelines**⁹, developed by allergists, respirologists, pediatricians, and emergency and family physicians, outline the best approach for asthma management in children and adults; they do not advise using lawn and garden pesticides to prevent, manage and treat asthma symptoms triggered by pollen. Allergists advise individuals to be aware of their allergy triggers, to avoid them as much as possible, and to follow their physician-prescribed allergy/asthma action plan at the first sign of an allergic reaction or an asthma flare-up.

A bylaw phasing out the non-essential use of lawn and garden pesticides in Ottawa will protect all of us from the harmful effects of pesticides, especially allergic and asthmatic children who inadvertently play on chemically treated lawns, and allergic and asthmatic individuals who work outdoors.

July 2005

(Endnotes)

¹"No public health gains from civic ban on pesticides". Letter to the Editor by Debra Conlon, Executive Director, Urban Pest Management Council of Canada. The Saskatoon StarPhoenix. Thu 12 May 2005.

²Salam, M.T., et al. 2004. Early Life Environmental Risk Factors for Asthma: Findings from the Children's Health Study. Environmental Health Perspectives. 112(6): 760.

³Lung Facts. 2004. Lung Association. (www.sk.lung.ca/content.cfm?edit_realword_lungfacts).

⁴Asthma Facts and Statistics. 2003. Lung Association. (www.lung.ca/asthma/facts.html).

⁵Asthma Facts and Statistics. 2003. Lung Association. (www.lung.ca/asthma/facts.html).

⁶Anaphylaxis Canada (www.anaphylaxis.org/).

⁷Caress, S.M. and Steinemann, A.C. 2003. A Review of a Two-Phase Population study of Multiple Chemical Sensitivities. Environmental Health Perspectives. 111(12): 1490-1497.

⁸Respiratory Disease in Canada. 2001. Canadian Institute for Health Information, Canadian Lung Association, Health Canada, Statistics Canada.

⁹Canadian Asthma Consensus Conference. Summary of Recommendations. 1996. Canadian Journal of Respiratory Guidelines 3(2):89-100. (www.pulsus.com/Respir/03_02erns_ed.htm) AND (www.asthmaguidelines.com)

