

# Pesticide

# info

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT PESTICIDES



## California Department of Pesticide Regulation

1001 I Street  
P.O. Box 4015  
Sacramento, CA 95812-4015  
916-445-4300  
www.cdpr.ca.gov

### BRANCHES

**Enforcement**  
916-324-4100

**Northern Regional Office**  
916-603-7700

**Central Regional Office**  
559-297-3511

**Southern Regional Office**  
714-279-7690

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916-324-4039

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**Pest Management and Licensing**  
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**Licensing and Certification Office**  
916-445-4038

**Pesticide Registration**  
916-445-4400

**Worker Health and Safety**  
916-445-4222

## Pesticides and food: How we test for safety

Eating a diet rich in fruits and vegetables is essential for developing and maintaining a healthy body. Californians lead the nation in meeting their daily-recommended rates for consuming fruits and vegetables. The Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) plays an important role in ensuring these fruits and vegetables do not contain illegal pesticide residues.

As part of DPR's responsibility to protect human health, the



department runs the largest and longest running state program for testing fresh produce for illegal pesticide residues.

Pesticides are widely used in agriculture for controlling pests. Nationally, U.S. EPA sets safety standards called "tolerances" that are the maximum safe levels for pesticide chemicals allowed in or on foods.

Across the state, DPR inspectors sample fruits and vegetables from places that pack or sell fresh produce, including farmers' markets, grocery stores, wholesale markets, importers, and packing houses. Inspectors sample produce based on seasonal availability and



**Food safety experts agree that any small risk from the trace levels of pesticides found in fresh produce should not keep you from the health benefits of a diet rich in fruits and vegetables.**

target fruit and vegetable types that infants and children may eat a lot of, representative of the state's diverse ethnic and socioeconomic groups, may be treated with pesticides considered carcinogenic or as reproductive toxins, or have a history of illegal pesticide residues.

Collected samples are analyzed at California Department of Food and Agriculture's Center for Analytical Chemistry for over 400 pesticides and breakdown chemicals.

Sampling results over the years show about 95 percent of samples tested have either legal levels of residues or no pesticide residues detected.

In the few samples with detected illegal pesticide residues, DPR quarantines and prohibits selling the illegal lot of produce. A residue is illegal if either the measured amount on the sample is greater than the U.S. EPA tolerance or no tolerance is set. While the overall rate of detection of illegal residues is low, the majority of illegal residues are found on imported produce.

**Tips to reduce pesticide residues on the food you eat.**

**Go for variety.** Eat a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables to reduce your likelihood of exposure to any one pesticide.



**Peel.** Throw away outer leaves, skins or rinds. Peel fruits and vegetables when possible.

**Wash.** Thoroughly wash all produce, under running water. Scrub firm fruits and vegetables, like melons and root vegetables. Washing will remove some residues, along with most dirt, and reduce bacterial contamination.

Even though the risk of pesticide exposure in food is extremely low, if you are still concerned consider organic produce. Organic produce tends to have fewer and lower levels of pesticide residues.

DPR's Pesticide Residue Monitoring program is a backstop to California's comprehensive approach to regulating pesticide use in the state. For more information about this program and to view past year's testing results, please visit DPR's webpage and enter "residue" into the search bar ([www.cdpr.ca.gov](http://www.cdpr.ca.gov)).



Single copies of this handout are available by calling your County Agricultural Commissioner's office, from DPR at 916-445-3974, or can be downloaded from DPR's Web site, [www.cdpr.ca.gov](http://www.cdpr.ca.gov), "Consumer Fact Sheets."