

Brain-Damaging Pesticide for Use on Foods Kids Eat. It's Legal

By [EWG](#)

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Farmers can keep spraying fruits and vegetables with a pesticide shown to harm a child's brain even at low levels of exposure, the Trump administration's Environmental Protection Agency said today.

With a court deadline looming, EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler announced his decision to allow chlorpyrifos to continue to be used on conventionally grown food crops, like peaches, cherries, apples, oranges and corn. The chemical is not allowed for use on organic produce.

In April, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled unanimously that the EPA must decide by mid-July whether to reverse the Trump administration's overturn of a scheduled ban on chlorpyrifos. The ban had been strongly supported by EPA scientists.

"Siding with pesticide corporations over the health and well-being of kids is the new normal at the EPA," said EWG President Ken Cook. "Today's decision underscores the sad truth that as long as the Trump administration is in charge, this EPA will favor the interests of the chemical lobby over children's safety."

Evidence is overwhelming that even small doses of chlorpyrifos can damage parts of the brain that control language, memory, behavior and emotion. Multiple independent studies have documented the fact that exposure to chlorpyrifos impairs children's IQs. EPA scientists' assessments of those studies concluded that the [levels of the pesticide currently found on food and in drinking water are unsafe](#).

The EPA's calculations suggest that babies, children and pregnant women all consume much more chlorpyrifos than is safe. They estimate that typical exposures for babies are five times greater than the EPA's proposed "safe" intake, and 11 to 15 times higher for toddlers and older children. A typical exposure for a pregnant woman is five times higher than it ought to be to protect her developing fetus.

The EPA was poised to ban the pesticide in 2017. But after the 2016 election Dow Chemical, which manufactures chlorpyrifos, set forth on [an aggressive campaign to pressure the incoming Trump administration](#) to block that decision. Dow donated \$1 million to President Trump's inauguration festivities and its CEO met privately with then-EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt. Soon after, Pruitt ignored his agency's own scientists and aborted the scheduled ban.

Besides produce, there are other dietary routes that make exposure to chlorpyrifos particularly worrisome for parents. Recent tests commissioned by the Organic Center found the insecticide in [nearly 60 percent of conventional milk samples](#) tested.

“If the Trump administration had followed the advice of its scientists, chlorpyrifos likely would not be in the food and milk kids eat and drink today,” said Cook. “This is another example of what happens when the wrong people are put in vital positions with enormous importance to public health.”

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