

What Can I Do if There is Spraying in My Community?

If mosquito, bird and/or human surveillance activities show that a mosquito-borne virus is present in your community, local officials may make the decision to spray a pesticide to kill mosquitoes. They will notify the public in advance about where and when spraying will take place and the kind of pesticide that will be used. You will find fact sheets about some pesticides commonly used to kill mosquitoes (*Anvil, Scourge and Malathion*) posted on the New York State Department of Health website (www.health.state.ny.us).

Chemicals used to kill adult mosquitoes are distributed by spray from trucks, airplanes, or helicopters. In addition, chemical and biological agents used to kill larval (immature) mosquitoes are occasionally distributed by airplane or helicopter. Because of where larval mosquitoes live, these are distributed over bodies of water, thus, humans are less at risk to come into contact with larval pesticides.

Because pesticides are inherently toxic, no pesticide is absolutely risk free. The likelihood of experiencing adverse health effects as result of exposure to any pesticide depends primarily on the amount of pesticide which a person contacts and the amount of time the person is in contact with that pesticide. In addition, a person's age, sex, genetic makeup, lifestyle and/or general health characteristics can affect his or her likelihood of experiencing adverse health effects as result of exposure to pesticides.

Although your chances of experiencing any health effects from spraying are quite low, the following common sense steps will help you reduce possible exposures to pesticides before, during, or after spraying.

Steps you should take:

- Children and pregnant women should take care to avoid exposure when practical.
- If possible, remain inside or avoid the area whenever spraying takes place and for about 30 minutes after spraying. That time period will greatly reduce the likelihood of your breathing pesticides in the air.
- Close windows and doors and turn off window air-conditioning units or close their vents to circulate indoor air before spraying begins. Windows and air-conditioner vents can be reopened about 30 minutes after spraying.
- If you come in direct contact with pesticide spray, protect your eyes. If you get pesticide spray in your eyes, immediately rinse them with water. Wash exposed skin. Wash clothes that come in direct contact with spray separately from other laundry.
- Consult your health care provider if you think you are experiencing health effects from spraying.

Steps you may want to take:

- If spraying just occurred, minimize your contact with outdoor surfaces and wash skin that has come in contact with these surfaces.
- Pick homegrown fruits and vegetables you expect to eat soon before spraying takes place. Rinse homegrown fruits and vegetables (in fact, all produce) thoroughly with water before cooking or eating.
- Cover outdoor tables and play equipment before spraying or wash them off with detergent and water after they have been sprayed.
- Bring laundry and small toys inside before spraying begins (wash with detergent and water if exposed to pesticides during spraying).
- Bring pet food and water dishes inside, and cover ornamental fishponds to avoid direct exposure.

For more information contact your county health department or visit the Department website at www.health.state.ny.us.

