School Pesticide Monitor

A Bi-Monthly Bulletin on Pesticides and Alternatives
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District's Model Lunch Program Offers Organic, Local Choices

This year back to school doesn't just mean new teachers and new school supplies. For the Boulder Valley School District (BVSD) in Colorado, it means a new school lunch program – one that focuses on nutrition and organic and locally grown foods. *The Lunch Box*, a new web tool, has been launched to help schools throughout the country do the same.

As a first step, every school cafeteria in the BVSD is providing regionally produced organic milk, locally produced foods from fruits and vegetables to whole grain baked products and burritos, and fresh salad bars. BVSD has also eliminated trans fats, high fructose corn syrup and highly processed foods. Other immediate changes to the district's program include training all nutrition services personnel on culinary skills, recipe development and safe food handling.

"We hope that this will not only benefit the families of Boulder Valley, but also allow our model to serve as an open book for school districts across the country," said Superintendent Chris King.

Chef Ann Cooper, BVSD's Interim Director of Nutrition Services, first conducted a feasibility study on how best to get BVSD from the traditional school food service model of highly processed, high sugar and sodium frozen foods to a sustainable model of scratch-cooked, closer to the source, and fresh foods. Much of the work with Ms. Cooper has been partially funded through a public-private partnership, the School Food Project (SFP), a unique task force of community businesses, nonprofits, activists, and district officials.

Ms. Cooper has also created *The Lunch Box: Healthy Tools To Help All Schools*, a web portal of tangible tools and practical solutions for school nutrition officials and children's health advocates across the U.S. It is a first-of-its-kind school nutrition resource with a comprehensive set of "why" and "how to" online tools to transition the typical highly processed school meal program to healthier, wholesome and fresh food-based menus with no trans fats, high fructose corn syrup or unnecessary chemical additives and preservatives.

To make the transition easier, especially

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Commonly Used Pesticides Linked To Childhood Cancer

A new study by researchers at Georgetown University finds a higher level of common household pesticides in the urine of children with acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL), a cancer that develops most commonly between three and seven years of age. The findings are published in the August issue of the journal *Therapeutic Drug Monitoring*.

Researchers, in the study entitled, "Pediatric Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia and Exposure to Pesticides," caution that these findings, which do not establish a cause-and-effect relationship, suggest an association between pesticide exposure and development of childhood ALL.

This study builds on previous studies finding exposures to certain pesticides increases the risk of developing certain cancers and degenerative diseases.

The study included 41 pairs of children with ALL and their mothers (cases), and 41 pairs of healthy children and their mothers (controls). For comparison purposes, the case pairs were matched with control pairs by age, sex and county of residence.

Urine samples were collected from all child-mother pairs and analyzed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to look for evidence of organophosphates (OP). The body breaks down OP into metabolites which can be tracked in urine samples.

The researchers say pesticides were detected in the urine of more than half of the participants, but levels of two common OP metobolites, diethylthiophosphate (DETP) and diethyldithiophosphate (DEDTP), were higher in the children with ALL compared to the control children. More case mothers (33 percent) than controls (14 percent) reported using insecticides in the home, however there was no correlation found between high levels of the OP metabolites in urine and reported use of pesticides.

"We know pesticides – sprays, strips, or 'bombs,' are found in at least 85 percent of households, but obviously not all the children in these homes develop cancer. What this study suggests is an association between pesticide exposure and the development of childhood ALL, but this isn't a cause-and-effect finding," the study's lead investigator, epidemiologist Offie Soldin, Ph.D. explains. "Future research would help us understand the exact role of pesticides in the development of cancer. We hypothesize that prenatal exposure coupled with genetic susceptibility or an additional environmental insult after birth

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This School Year, Fight Germs without Hazardous Antibacterials

As children return to school, health and environmental groups are encouraging parents to protect their children from harmful germs without using hazardous chemicals in soaps, sanitizers, lunch bags and school supplies. The dangers of and alternatives to using triclosan (often marketed as Microban) and the related compound triclocarban, are documented in new educational materials for parents.

The factsheet, *What's The Right Answer To The Germ Question?*, by Beyond Pesticides and Food & Water Watch, pulls together information from various scientific studies documenting the adverse impacts of triclosan on health and the environment, as well as antibiotic and antibacterial resistance. It also provides alternatives, cites the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommendations for hand washing and disease prevention, and lists triclosan-free brands and retailers.

Triclosan is associated with skin irritation and eczema, has been shown to interfere with the body's hormones, and has been linked to an increased risk of developing respiratory illness, or asthma, and cancer, as well as subtle effects on learning ability. Because the chemical goes down the drain, it also wreaks havoc with the environment, converting to highly toxic dioxins and contaminating waterways and wildlife. Furthermore, by killing some, but not all bacteria, widespread triclosan use has led to resistant strains and cross resistance with antibiotics.

Handwashing with soap and water is essential. A Food and Drug Administration panel concluded that triclosan soaps are no more effective than washing hands with soap and water. The CDC recommends that children wash their hands several times a day for 20 seconds or the time it takes to sing "Happy Birthday" twice.

"Considering the health risks associated with triclosan use and increased bacterial resistance, consumers may actually be doing more harm than good," says Jay Feldman, executive director of Beyond Pesticides. "Parents should follow CDC recommendations and protect their children by washing hands with soap and warm water."

To download *What's The Right Answer To The Germ Question?*or for information on how to get triclosan out of your school, see www.beyondpesticides.org/antibacterial.

Organic School Lunch Program
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with today's tight school district budgets, *The Lunch Box* makes available at no charge: 80 scalable recipes; nutritional and cost analyses; menu plans; budget, inventory and procurement models and templates; "How to Get Started" tips and case studies; food safety, handling and hazard analysis and tools; and, training videos.

Food & Water Watch, based in Washington, DC, works with schools to provide organic milk or milk not treated with the recombinant bovine growth hormone (rBGH). Its report, *rBGH: How Artificial Hormones Damage the Dairy Industry and Endanger Public Health*, describes how this genetically engineered artificial hormone has been linked to cancer in humans and numerous illnesses in dairy cows.

Approved in 1994 by the Food and Drug Administration, rBGH is injected into cows to make them produce more milk. Based on the number of dairies that use rBGH in the United States, it is possible that at least 84 million gallons of milk from rBGH-treated cows were distributed through the school nutrition programs in 2005-2006.

Some school districts, including Seattle public schools, and California school districts in Berkeley, Santa Monica, and Palo Alto, already have policies banning junk food and encouraging organic food in school cafeterias. The San Francisco Unified School District and the River Valley School District in Wisconsin, have passed school board resolutions to source only rBGH-free milk in their schools due to parents' demands. And an organic salad bar started at Lincoln Elementary School in Olympia, Washington has proven so popular and economically feasible, all grade schools in Olympia now have one.

Children who eat a diet of organic food show a level of pesticides in their body that is six times lower than children who eat a diet of conventionally produced food.

Pesticides Linked to Childhood Cancer
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could be to blame."

Children are more vulnerable to the negative effects of pesticide exposures. EPA concurs that children take in more pesticides relative to body weight than adults and have organ systems that are more vulnerable and less able to detoxify toxic chemicals during developmental phasees of life. The National Academy of Sciences reports that children are more susceptible to chemicals than adults and estimates that 50% of lifetime pesticide exposure occurs during the first five years of life.