

Pesticides Tied to Childhood Cancers

By **Nicholas Bakalar** September 21, 2015 1:01 pm

Childhood exposure to indoor insecticides is associated with an increased risk for certain childhood cancers, a new study has found.

Researchers reviewed 16 studies of children exposed to indoor pesticides, including professional pest control services, indoor flea foggers, flea and tick pet collars, and various ready-to-use roach and ant sprays. The analysis, in *Pediatrics*, included 7,400 cancer cases matched with 9,437 healthy control subjects.

Exposure to indoor, but not outdoor, residential insecticides was associated with a 47 percent increased risk for childhood leukemia and a 43 percent increased risk for childhood lymphomas. Outdoor pesticides used as weed killers were associated with a 26 percent increased risk for brain tumors.

The authors acknowledge that the small number of studies included in the review is a major weakness of the analysis, and emphasize that these are increases in the relative risks for diseases that are not common to begin with.

“The incidence of childhood leukemia and lymphoma has increased in recent years, and that prompted us to look at this issue,” said the senior author, Chensheng Lu, an associate professor of environmental exposure biology at the Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health. “But the risks can be managed as long as parents think, before using pesticides, about better ways to make a house pest-proof or pest-free. That’s a far more important

message.”

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