

Essential Information for Healthcare Providers

Pregnant Agricultural Workers and Pesticides



Contact with certain pesticides during pregnancy can lead to miscarriages, preterm births, low birth weight, birth defects, and adverse neurodevelopmental outcomes. Prolonged exposure to small amounts of some pesticides during pregnancy may have effects that can occur long after birth.

 Agricultural workers who are pregnant or planning to become pregnant should be informed of possible impacts of exposure before, during, and after pregnancy.

As a healthcare provider, you can play an important role to ensure pregnant agricultural workers limit their exposure to pesticides, receive recommendations for workplace accommodations, and are informed about leave available to them.

Raise Awareness to Limit Exposure to Pesticides

Women who are pregnant or planning to become pregnant should limit their exposure to pesticides at all times, but especially during the first weeks of pregnancy. They should avoid handling pesticides whenever possible.

How Can You Help?

Give your patient information on the risks of pesticide exposure, particularly to the fetus, and recommend that they carefully read the product labels before use. Remind them to wear personal protective equipment when required, abstain from entering a treated field until permitted, launder work clothes separately, and leave work shoes outside.

Learn More

OEHHA's Free CME Accredited Online Course

This [course](#), designed for healthcare providers, presents information on how to diagnose and treat pesticide illnesses and find information on the toxicity of specific pesticides.

<https://mededpesticide.org/signin/>

California Department of Pesticide Regulation's Pesticide Safety Information Series

These [leaflets](#) provide guidelines for field workers & pesticide handlers on working safely with pesticides. All leaflets are available in English, Spanish, Punjabi, and Hmong.

www.cdpr.ca.gov/docs/whs/psisenglish.html

Need Extra Assistance?

Contact community health workers (CHWs) or *promotores de salud* to enhance communication between you and your patient and get support to advocate for your patient's protection. To locate a CHW in your area, reach out to any of these organizations:

Visión y Compromiso | 213-613-0630

Comite Civico del Valle | 760-351-8761

California Department of Public Health's Comprehensive Perinatal Services Program

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CFH/DMCAH/CPSP/Pages/Sites.aspx>



Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment
California Environmental Protection Agency

 510-622-3170

 pesticides@oehha.ca.gov

 www.oehha.ca.gov/pesticides

Start the Conversation With Your Patient

Begin by asking your patient about their work practices and potential occupational exposures to determine their risk level. Examples of questions:

1. What kind of work do you do?
2. What are your specific job duties?
3. Do you handle or come in close contact with pesticides at work?
4. If so, do you use personal protective equipment? Does it properly fit you?

Learn More

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Recognition & Management of Pesticide Poisonings: 6th Edition

This [manual](#) is a quick reference resource for physicians with toxicology and treatment information for particular pesticide exposures, and guidelines for conducting environmental and occupational screenings on patients.

www.epa.gov/pesticide-worker-safety/recognition-and-management-pesticide-poisonings

Based on your assessment of your patient's risk, you can determine how to proceed.

1. Given your patient's pregnancy, is it medically safe for your patient to continue working?
2. Does your patient need to continue working for financial or other personal reasons?

If the answer to at least **ONE** of those questions is **NO...**

Inform Patients About Their Rights

Pregnant agricultural workers may be entitled to several protections. These include both job-protected time off work and wage replacement. These protections are offered regardless of their immigration status.

In California, many of these protections can overlap, covering your patient during pregnancy as early as a positive pregnancy test and even after childbirth. Each patient's eligibility varies depending on the risks associated with their pregnancy.

How Can You Help?

File for protections such as California State Disability insurance on behalf of your patient. Use ICD-10 codes like Z57.4 (occupational exposure to toxic agents in agriculture).

Learn More

California Department of Fair Employment & Housing

[Webpage](#) offers information about eligibility for various job-protected time off work options.

www.dfeh.ca.gov/employment/pdl-cfra-npla-fmla

California Employment Development Department

[Webpage](#) offers information about claiming replacement income.

www.edd.ca.gov/Disability

If the answers to **BOTH** of these questions is **YES...**

Recommend Accommodations

California employers are required by law to provide reasonable accommodations for pregnant employees who are unable to perform certain job duties due to pregnancy or pregnancy-related medical conditions.

How Can You Help?

Identify reasonable accommodation(s) specific to pregnant agricultural workers. This could include modifying work practices, duties, or schedules to limit pesticide exposure.

Write a note to your patient's employer to assist them in receiving reasonable accommodations to safely continue working during and after pregnancy.

An effective note should state your patient's condition, identify and provide expected duration of their limitation(s), and specify the recommended accommodations.

Learn More

University of California, Hastings College of the Law Center for WorkLife Law – Pregnant@Work Initiative

[Resource center](#) offers healthcare professionals with sample accommodation notes, webinars, and a help hotline.

www.pregnantatwork.org/healthcare-professionals

