

Parents of Harmed Children Sue Manufacturer of Brain-Damaging Insecticide Chlorpyrifos

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by [Beyond Pesticides](#)

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(*Beyond Pesticides*, July 14, 2021) Corteva ([formerly DowDupont](#)) is facing a potential class-action lawsuit after several California families filed suit claiming that the use of the insecticide chlorpyrifos around their homes resulted in birth defects, brain damage, and developmental problems in their children. Chlorpyrifos is an organophosphate insecticide that has been linked to a range of health ailments, posing [significant hazards particularly for pregnant mothers and their children.](#) The lawsuits come as the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) [approaches a court-imposed 60-day deadline](#) to decide the fate of the pesticide's registration.

Attorneys for the court cases, filed on behalf of individuals located in four California communities (Fresno, Kings, Medera, and Tulare counties), indicate they intend to pursue class-action status, which would allow additional injured parties to join the lawsuit. The plaintiffs argue that the effects of chlorpyrifos exposure lingers in the agricultural communities where they reside. "We have found it in the houses, we have found it in carpet, in upholstered furniture, we found it in a

teddy bear, and we found it on the walls and surfaces,” said Stuart Calwell, lead attorney for the plaintiffs. “Then a little child picks up a teddy bear and holds on to it.” Ultimately, 100,000 people in California’s farming regions may need to remove items in their homes that were contaminated by chlorpyrifos, attorneys say.

Each of the four plaintiff families have children with developmental disabilities that they indicate were caused by chlorpyrifos exposure. This real-world occurrence is supported by the scientific literature. Studies find that children exposed to high levels of chlorpyrifos experience [mental development delays, attention problems, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder problems](#), and pervasive developmental disorders at three years of age. Concentrations of chlorpyrifos in umbilical cord blood were also found to [correspond to a decrease in the psychomotor development](#) and a decrease in the mental development in 3-year olds.

Additional research reinforces these findings, with evidence that [children with high exposure levels of chlorpyrifos have changes to the brain](#), including enlargement of superior temporal, posterior middle temporal, and inferior postcentral gyri bilaterally, and enlarged superior frontal gyrus, gyrus rectus, cuneus, and precuneus along the mesial wall of the right hemisphere.

Although [Corteva has dropped out of the chlorpyrifos market](#), it is not supporting the cancellation of the chemical, and other manufacturers continue to produce it. Three years ago, [Hawaii became the first state](#) to begin to phase out chlorpyrifos use. In New York, a law passed by the state legislature implementing a ban prior to Hawaii’s was [vetoed by Governor Cuomo \(D\) and shunted to a slower state rulemaking process](#). [California](#) has likewise initiated rulemaking to ban the chemical, but minor uses are likely to remain.

Meanwhile, EPA, despite a change in administration, has taken no significant action to eliminate chlorpyrifos to date. In

May 2021, a federal appeals court [gave EPA a 60-day deadline](#) to provide a “legally sufficient response” to a petition originally filed in 2007, urging the agency to ban food uses of the chemical. Advocates say this is a low bar for the Biden administration to clear. With the Biden EPA, under the leadership of Administrator Michael Regan, [defending a broad range of Trump-era pesticide decisions](#), advocates are concerned that [EPA’s Office of Pesticide Programs remains broken](#).

Like other recent lawsuits filed around toxic pesticide exposure, including [Parkinson-linked paraquat](#) and [cancer-causing glyphosate](#), EPA inaction has made it so that the only remedy for affected individuals and communities is the court system.

Canada [has begun to quietly phase out chlorpyrifos](#), and the European Union continues to lead the world in pesticide protections after it decided not to renew its registration for the chemical, permitting only a short grace period of 3 months for final storage, disposal, and use.

If EPA fails to ban chlorpyrifos, it will be a major blow for environmental justice, given that risks of exposure fall disproportionately on low-income African American and Latino families, including farmworker families, who are at the greatest risk of harm. Help stop the ongoing poisoning of these communities by [urging EPA to ban chlorpyrifos today](#). But don’t stop at chlorpyrifos – as banning its use is simply the first step in eliminating other neurotoxic pesticides on the market. [Tell EPA chlorpyrifos and all brain-damaging pesticides need to be banned immediately](#).

All unattributed positions and opinions in this piece are those of Beyond Pesticides.

Source: [Associated Press](#)

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