

Cleaning Pesticide Soiled Clothing

Clothing worn while applying pesticides normally becomes contaminated. From these clothes, the body can contact and absorb the chemicals. Protective clothing (long-sleeve shirts, pants, gloves, hat, and boots) can reduce pesticide exposure, but unless they are laundered properly, significant amounts of pesticides can remain on them or be passed onto other clothing. Keep in mind the following to guard against pesticide exposure from clothing.



- Launder clothing after each day's wear. Clothing repeatedly soiled before cleaning can retain pesticides even after it's later laundered. Washing less frequently also puts more chemicals into the wash and rinse water.
- Pre-rinse clothing before washing. As soon as possible, remove clothes, turn pockets and cuffs inside out, drop clothes into a container or washing machine and rinse or hose off. Then wash hands thoroughly.
- Wash and store pesticide soiled clothing away from other laundry. During laundering or storage, pesticides can be passed to other clothing and linens.
- Wash pesticide soiled clothing in hot water. Water 140o F or hotter removes more pesticide than lower water temperatures.
- Use a heavy-duty liquid detergent. Strong liquid detergents are more effective in removing pesticides, especially oil-based pesticides.
- Use a full tub of water and don't overload. Water should circulate freely through pesticide soiled clothing.
- Wash clothing several times if pesticide was moderately to highly toxic or if a large area was saturated. Do not dry clothes between washings.
- Clean the washer by running an empty load using detergent and hot water. Follow by wiping the drum with a damp cloth.
- Dry clothing on an outside clothesline when possible. Sunlight exposure helps break down pesticides. Dryers don't decontaminate as thoroughly.

Properly discard clothing heavily contaminated with highly toxic pesticides. As the concentration of pesticide increases, the ability to launder and remove the residue decreases. However, clothing soiled by low toxicity pesticides can be laundered safely and effectively, even if large areas are soiled.

