

THE greenREPORT



Winter 2002

Poison...Right in Your Backyard


Chances are pretty good that the wood your deck is made of and the picnic table you're eating from are sources of potential toxicity. Namely, arsenic.

As noted in the report "The Poisonwood Rivals" by Environmental Working Group (EWG) and Healthy Building Network (HBN), nationwide sampling in 13 metropolitan areas found harmful levels of the poison in wood purchased at Home Depot and Lowe's Home Improvement Warehouse stores. On average, an area of wood the size of a four-year-old's hand contained 120 times the amount of arsenic considered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to be safe in a six-ounce glass of water.

Pressure from members of environmental advocacy groups, including Generation Green, is having some impact. Earlier this year, Lowe's asked suppliers for picnic tables that use arsenic-treated wood only for the braces. By spring, the store will only sell picnic tables made with arsenic-free wood. Arsenic will continue to be used in decks and backyard play sets, though, based on the theory that food generally doesn't contact such structures. But arsenic from such wood sticks to children's hands, and children put their fingers in their mouths. Also, the poison can be absorbed through children's skin.

"This report only confirms the problems that Generation Green and other organizations have been working to draw attention to for months," said Rochelle Davis, Executive Director of

Generation Green. "Even though safer alternatives are available, retailers continue to sell products they know are creating a risk for consumers and their families."

Clearly, more pressure is needed to get Lowe's, Home Depot and others to stop carrying CCA treated wood. Insist they carry wood treated with safer substances, such as the arsenic- and chromium-free "alkaline copper quat." You can write to Robert L. Tillman, CEO; Lowe's Companies, Inc.; P.O. Box 1111; N. Wilkesboro, NC 28656 and to Bob Nardellie, President; The Home Depot, Inc.; 2455 Paces Ferry Road, NW; Atlanta, GA 30339-4024. You also can visit www.homedepot.com and go to the comment section to make your opinions known. 

One Side of the Story?

Many newspapers have refused to run a paid advertisement from Environmental Working Group and Healthy Building Network, including some owned by the publishers of *The Wall Street Journal* and the *Boston Herald*. The ad criticizes Home Depot for selling arsenic-treated wood, and many of these publications run ads from Home Depot.

"Home Depot spends millions to advertise its products, and some of those ads have claimed that arsenic-treated wood is safe," says Bill Walsh, director of Healthy Building Network. "For these newspapers to run whole sections of Home Depot's ads, then refuse to sell us less than a page of space, denies their readers access to balanced information about a very real threat."

As a recent EWG ad points out, "If arsenic-treated wood is too toxic for zoo animals...why does The Home Depot think it's safe for your kids?"

America, the Poisonous

Manufacturers treat wood with heavy doses of arsenic to keep out bugs and prevent rot, even though arsenic is poisonous in the short run and also has long-term cancer-causing risks. Switzerland, Vietnam and Indonesia have completely banned such use of arsenic. Japan, Denmark, Sweden, Germany, Australia and New Zealand have taken strong steps to limit its use. Yet arsenic-treated lumber is found in more than 90 percent of all outdoor wooden structures in this country.

A tester in Chicago prepares to sample a piece of pressure-treated wood for arsenic residue.



Congress Commits... Sort of...to Healthy Schools

Included in the education appropriations bill passed by the U.S. Congress in mid-December were elements that address environmental concerns. Specifically, the legislators incorporated some provisions of bills that had been sponsored by Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-N.Y.) and Sen. Robert G. Toricelli (D-N.J.).

The new legislation directs researchers to study potentially unhealthy characteristics of school environments, such as poor indoor air quality; inappropriate use of pesticides, insecticides and cleaners; the presence of asbestos or radon; lead-based paint; and contaminated drinking water. Researchers also will examine how such characteristics might adversely impact student achievement, student concentration, student behavior and other education-related effects.

Where the legislation falls short is in provisions for grant programs that will help establish elementary and secondary school

buildings that are healthful, productive, energy-efficient, and environmentally sound. Clinton and others had called for a \$50 million grant program. However, the law that has passed is pointedly unspecific, leaving funding and awarding of grants at the discretion of the Secretary of Education.

We need to insist that funds be specifically earmarked and budgeted for this effort. A grant program with no funding is pointless.

Please contact Rod Paige, Secretary of Education, to urge him to set aside funds to assist states and local schools in making repairs and improvements that will make schools environmentally healthy places to learn and work. You can write him at U.S. Department of Education; 400 Maryland Avenue, SW; Building FOB-6; Room 7W301; Washington, DC 20202 or e-mail him at Rod.Paige@ed.gov 🌱

Join the Leadership Circle

Generation Green has been able to do a great deal in local, regional and national campaigns to put the health needs of families on the agenda, thanks to your support and your willingness to contact politicians, business leaders and other "power players."

But there is so much more to do, and it's time for us all to take these advocacy efforts to the next level. To help get there, we have created the Generation Green Leadership Circle for those members who are able to give at least \$2,002 in the year 2002. Such contributors will not only get special recognition by Generation Green but the knowledge that they are contributing directly to a campaign to expand advocacy efforts across the nation.

We need to push the envelope for the sake of our children and ourselves. We hope you will join hand-in-hand with us to make that possible...and become part of the Leadership Circle.

Become a member of the Leadership Circle by sending your contribution to Generation Green now. Monthly or quarterly credit card payment plans are available.

Because Generation Green does lobbying, contributions are not tax-deductible. However, Generation Green Fund, our public education partner, can accept tax-deductible contributions. Send checks to Rochelle Davis, Generation Green, P.O. Box 7072, Evanston, IL 60201. For more information or to charge to your credit card, call Rochelle at 800-652-0827 or e-mail her at rochelle@generationgreen.org. 🌱



EPA Still Sluggish on Carbamate Issue

In 2001, Generation Green urged the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to focus its action on those pesticides that present the greatest risk to children. Specifically, we have been drawing attention to the need to group organophosphates and carbamates together for the purpose of making the cumulative risk assessment as required under the Food Quality Protection Act.

Combining organophosphates and carbamates together is warranted because both classes of pesticides act on the body in the same common way. We have argued in the past that all organophosphates need to be grouped together, which the EPA is now doing. But on the issue of carbamates, the EPA continues to evaluate them separately from organophosphates, and Generation Green will continue to keep watch on this issue. 🌱

Healthy Harvest

Fruits and vegetables are the staples of a healthy diet, right? Well, it's not always that simple. While an excellent source of vitamins and minerals, the health benefits of some fruits and vegetables are compromised by an alarming variety of pesticide residues. Organically grown produce can be a good solution, but is not always available or affordable.

Generation Green is at the forefront of the battle for pesticide tolerance policies that protect children. Until pesticide residue standards improve, we can protect our families by learning which fruits and vegetables have less pesticide residue and serving them in our family's meals. Towards that end, we are compiling a Healthy Harvest Cookbook, featuring individuals who fight to protect children from unnecessary toxic exposure, along with their favorite recipes using the fruits and vegetables that have the least amount of pesticide residues.

This issue, our focus is on Nancy Chuda, who fights to eliminate exposure to environmental toxins. Her own daughter died of cancer due to suspected toxic exposure, so we include a recipe using broccoli, which has cancer-fighting potential and a generally low level of pesticide residue.

Nancy Chuda: Keeping Children's Health a Priority

Nancy and Jim Chuda had done everything possible to safeguard the health of their young daughter, Colette. They even fed her organic baby food produced by Nancy's own baby-food company, Baby's Choice. But at age 4, Colette was diagnosed with a rare cancer known as Wilm's Tumor. Genetic testing showed that Colette's cancer was not inherited.



Nancy and Jim Chuda

The Chudas suspected environmental contamination, a hunch that was later given credence by a study associating Wilm's Tumor with pesticide exposure.

When Colette died, the Chudas transformed their grief into action. They

founded the Colette Chuda Environmental Fund (CCEF) and the Children's Health Environmental Coalition (CHEC), both dedicated to protecting children by eliminating environmental toxins. CHEC has since spurred a report from the Natural Resources Defense Council, titled "Handle with Care: Children and Their Exposure to Carcinogens," and it helped get the Healthy Schools Act passed in California to minimize pesticide use in schools.

According to Nancy, "Most parents don't even know there is a problem with pesticides." To help get the message out, CHEC created an educational video titled "Not Under My Roof," starring Olivia Newton John and Kelly Preston. The video, which costs \$13.90 (including shipping), can be obtained by writing to Rochelle Davis, Generation Green, P.O. Box 7072, Evanston, IL 60201, calling her at 800-652-0827 or e-mailing her at rochelle@generationgreen.org.

Among other things, the video teaches CHEC's "Recipe for Healthy Children," which offers five simple steps to avoid pesticide exposure.

Shop Smart: Buy locally grown or organic food. Wash and peel.

Ventilate: Indoor air can be worse than the air outside.

Clean with Care: Look for nontoxic labeling because cleaners leave residues.

Renovate Right: Caulk to eliminate bug holes where plumbing enters the home.

Keep It Out: Avoid pesticides in and around the home because residues enter on shoes. 🌱

Bow-Ties with Broccoli and Chickpeas

The king of cruciferous vegetables, broccoli is a good source of calcium and beta-carotene. It can help boost your immunity, fight off cancer and protect against heart disease.










- 12 ounces bow-tie pasta
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 large red onion, sliced
- 4 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 large heads broccoli, cut into florets (about 5 cups)
- ¾ cup chicken broth or vegetable broth
- ¾ cup dry white wine or another ¾ cup broth
- 1 can (15 ounces) chickpeas, rinsed and drained
- ½ teaspoon ground black pepper
- 2 tablespoons butter
- ⅓ cup grated Parmesan cheese

- 🌱 Cook the pasta according to the package directions. Meanwhile, heat the oil in a large skillet over medium heat. When hot, stir in the onions and garlic. Cook, stirring occasionally, until softened, about 5 minutes.
- 🌱 Add the broccoli, broth, and wine. Bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce the heat to medium, cover, and simmer until the broccoli is just tender, 5 minutes. Add the chickpeas and pepper.
- 🌱 Drain the pasta and add to the broccoli along with the butter. Toss to mix. Serve sprinkled with the Parmesan. (Makes six servings)

Keeping Breaths of Fresh Air at Home

We all worry about ozone levels and car emissions and other aspects of air pollution, and rightfully so. But have you thought about whether the air in your home is healthy? It might not be quite as benign as you think, and with asthma among children and other air-pollution related problems on the rise, we need to make sure children can at least breathe easy at home. Here are just a few tips to help you:



-  Before you use your furnace in the fall, have it inspected for carbon monoxide (CO) risks, and get a CO detector. This gas is an invisible, odorless killer.
-  Test your home for radon periodically. This radioactive gas seeps up from the ground naturally in some areas. Outdoors, it dissipates quickly. But in buildings, it can build up to toxic and cancer-causing levels.
-  Frequently clean out your refrigerator's drip pan, your humidifier and other places where water gathers and may stand for some time. These places help promote mold and mildew, which can be released into the air.
-  Clean your carpet and dust your home with a damp cloth regularly.
-  If you have pets and allergies to them, but cannot keep those pets outside, at least keep them out of the bedrooms.
-  Don't smoke inside the house. 

Healthy Home Guide

Looking for a little guidance on how to make day-to-day life healthier for your kids and their friends? Generation Green is now offering the "Help Yourself to a Healthy Home" guide. The 24-page guide covers issues like indoor air quality, drinking water, lead exposure, pesticides and hazardous household products, and it provides facts, figures, and practical tips. As with most aspects of living right, it all begins at home.

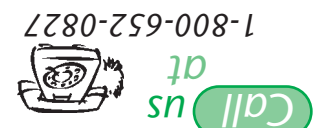
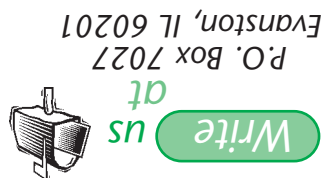
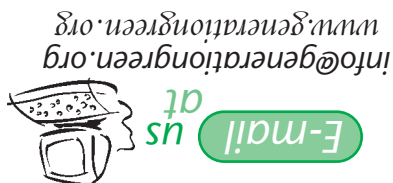
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