

# Helping You Get a Handle on Asthma

Generation Green has prepared an “Asthma Risk Reduction Action Kit” that puts a heavy emphasis on air quality issues at schools. It provides you with basic facts and information about asthma and with suggestions on where schools can improve and what you can do. Resources are also provided so that you can do some research on your own about the issue, and we outline the legislative and other policy issues that need to be addressed.



We should note, however, that the indoor air quality in our homes can also put kids at risk, as can other home-based toxins. So, consider getting a copy of the “Help Yourself to a Healthy Home” guide as well. 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.

To get a copy of either or both publications, just contact us by e-mail at [info@generationgreen.org](mailto:info@generationgreen.org) or call 800-652-0827. 🌱

## Congress Backs Off Protecting Kids from Pesticides

One of the lynchpin issues in reducing asthma and other health risks—especially respiratory ones—among school-age kids is to reduce the use of chemicals with noxious or toxic fumes. One of the biggest offenders at schools is pesticides.

Congress had a prime opportunity to do that by passing the School Environment Protection Act of 2002 (SEPA), an amendment that was attached to the current Farm Bill. But SEPA was withdrawn in early May due to opposition from the House Agriculture Committee.

Among its various provisions, SEPA would have promoted pest management practices centered on effective nontoxic measures, and it would have required notification to parents and school staff when pesticides are used in the schools.

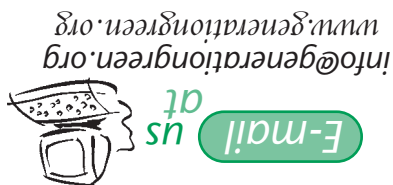
Although 31 states have adopted pesticide laws with one or more of SEPA’s provisions, state laws are uneven and inadequate overall. Only four states have laws that cover all the major areas that SEPA would have: Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan and Pennsylvania. 🌱



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# THE greenREPORT



Summer 2002

## Victory Achieved With Phase-Out of Arsenic-Treated Wood

In case you were wondering, your letters and e-mails *do* make a difference. This was evidenced by our victory early this year in spurring a phase-out of use of the toxic chromated copper arsenate (CCA) in pressure-treated wood. Such wood has been used to build play equipment, picnic tables and other structures your children touch often.

Recent tests performed by Environmental Working Group (EWG) and Healthy Building Network (HBN) found that lumber sold in major stores like The Home Depot and Lowe's contained arsenic far in excess of the guidelines set by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). That so-called "safe" EPA level is 10 micrograms of arsenic per liter of drinking water. On average, surface contamination of an area of CCA-treated lumber the size of a child's hand exceeded that level by 120 times. Considering how often kids' hands go into their mouths, this was not encouraging.

But a joint effort in conjunction with EWG and HBN yielded 20,000 letters to retailers—a huge percentage of them from Generation Green members and supporters. And that doesn't include the many *other* letters from you that went out to government officials as well.

Also, during our campaign against CCA-treated wood, Generation Green representatives spoke to 10,000 people directly, provided interviews to the media, and attended events like the National PTA conference in Baltimore, the All About Kids Expo in Cincinnati and the Women's Health and Fitness Expo in Minneapolis.

That kind of public pressure and visibility got retailers, lumber manufacturers and the EPA to sit down and agree to a phase-out of CCA-treated wood in January.

This is a huge step toward making schools, playgrounds and backyards arsenic-free, which takes one more toxin out of kids' lives. But there is still one thing that the industry doesn't want to see, and that is risk assessments of arsenic-treated wood. It would prefer to see the issue fade away now that a phase-out is in progress.

But the arsenic-treated wood that has already been sold and used is still out there even though a phase-out has been negotiated. And it will still be there when the phase-out is complete.

### Time is Running Out for Arsenic

In February 2002, the EPA set a 22-month timeframe for the phase-out of CCA-treated wood used in homes, playground equipment and other consumer goods. It would be best for us and for the environment, of course, if lumber manufacturers converted to new wood-treatment methods much sooner.

One way to do this is for major retailers to demand CCA-free wood. At least one major retailer, The Home Depot, has vowed to stop selling CCA-treated wood "well in advance of the EPA deadline," according to Ron Jarvis, the company's vice president of merchandising-lumber.

Although this promise remains vague on details, it is proof of the power of consumer pressure. In addition, a recent survey of playground equipment manufacturers shows that the vast majority of companies no longer use CCA-treated wood in play structures. For a detailed list of companies, visit our Web site at [www.generationgreen.org](http://www.generationgreen.org) or call us at 800-652-0827.

We need to quantify what kind of risk that wood poses to our families, and we need to know how best to dispose of CCA-treated materials. So we need a thorough risk assessment. We need to continue to pressure the EPA to follow through with these assessments, which Generation Green and allied organizations have been insisting on for years.

"We have momentum going now," says Rochelle Davis, executive director of Generation Green. "We have to make sure the EPA takes action, and quickly."

The lumber industry caught a huge break in the 1980s when it was exempted from arsenic rules that other industries had to follow. We need to ensure that they don't get a free ride again. Let's make sure risk assessments are carried out—and soon.

Please contact EPA Administrator Christine Todd Whitman at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; 1101A; USEPA Headquarters; Ariel Rios Building; 1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.; Washington, DC 20460. Tell her that you, like so many other concerned citizens, want risk assessments performed.

You can also contact her via e-mail at [Whitman.Christine@epamail.epa.gov](mailto:Whitman.Christine@epamail.epa.gov). 🌱

# Asthma Problems Linked to School Air Quality

**W**e've seen a sharp rise in asthma rates among children, with nearly five million kids suffering from the disease right now. It seems very likely that problems with indoor air quality are a major contributing factor. Of course, there is much we can do to manage air quality in our own homes, and we can choose not to go places where air quality might pose a threat to our families.

But schools have a great many problems with air quality, particularly indoors where toxins and irritants can accumulate to terrible levels. And there is no way for a child to avoid school buildings short of home schooling.

The U.S. General Accounting Office has said, "While laws compel children to attend school, some school buildings may be unsafe or even harmful to children's health." And Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, speaking on the School Environmental Protection Act in November 2001 (shortly after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks) noted that "the nation has been gripped by the fear of biological and chemical attack. But every day in schools across the nation, children are exposed to dangerous pesticides that can make them sick."

Pesticide use, airborne contamination, rodent droppings and insect parts can all trigger asthma in kids at school. In some cases kids susceptible to asthma, but who haven't developed symptoms, may be pushed over the edge by exposure to toxic irritants. Furthermore, asthma is now the number one cause of school absenteeism and a leading reason for children being admitted to the hospital. This is a threat that Generation Green will be tackling head-on through a campaign focused on asthma and indoor air quality as it relates to schools.

The federal General Accounting Office has noted that about half of all schools have at least one

significant environmental problem. Similarly, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency says that half of all schools have less than ideal indoor air quality. And in 1999, the U.S. Department of Education reported that \$127 billion is needed for major rehabilitation and new construction of public schools nationwide. Clearly, it's time for us to speak up and make sure that something is done to reverse this travesty. 🌱

## Government Skittish on School Health

Asthma risks are strongly linked to the environmental health of schools—as are so many other conditions afflicting our children. So, is the government doing anything about it? Yes. And No.

The education appropriations bill the U.S. Congress passed in December 2001 included several elements that address environmental concerns related to schools, including provisions to study characteristics of school environments that could be unhealthy, such as poor indoor air quality, inappropriate use of chemicals, lead-based paint, and contaminated water. Researchers will examine how such things might adversely impact student achievement, student concentration, student behavior and other education-related effects.

But the federal government will not help schools make the repairs necessary to fix such problems, and that includes indoor air pollution issues.

Instead, legislators created a grant program to fund such issues as analyzing building strategies, designs, materials and equipment—as well as to conduct research and obtain technical assistance. But even while it established the program, Congress failed to dedicate any funds to it. Instead, they left funding up to the discretion of the Secretary of Education.

Implementing this grant program would be an important first step—so that we can begin working on the next steps. Please contact Rod Paige, Secretary of Education, to urge him to implement the environmental health study and to allocate \$50 million a year for the grant program. He can be reached at the U.S. Department of Education; 400 Maryland Avenue, SW; Building FOB-6; Room 7W301; Washington, DC 20202 or via e-mail at [Rod.Paige@ed.gov](mailto:Rod.Paige@ed.gov).

As for school construction, there may be some light at the end of the tunnel. Several U.S. senators introduced a bill in April that would capitalize State Infrastructure Banks (SIBs) to help schools with construction and repairs while maintaining state and local flexibility and responsibility. This would be a middle ground for legislators who are opposed to any federal role and others who want federal tax credits for school bonds. 🌱

## "Next" Generation Web Site Set to Launch

**G**eneration Green is getting a makeover on the Web. In between advocacy efforts and action alerts, we've been working on a better organized, more user-friendly, more useful and more visually pleasing new Web site.

The site will be broken down into sections to help you more easily find policy information, action alerts, health and home

information, suggestions for reading material, and so on. Of course, we welcome you to comment on the site and provide suggestions on future directions once it launches.

The scheduled launch date for the new site is June 21. It will still be located at [www.generationgreen.org](http://www.generationgreen.org). We look forward to "seeing" you there. 🌱

# Healthy Harvest

**F**ruits 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, we focus on Nell Newman, the daughter of Joanne Woodward and "Pa" Paul Newman, actor and founder of the Newman's Own line of foods. The Newman brand name has done much to bring social consciousness to the grocery aisle. It also led to the 1993 birth of Newman's Own Organics, which marries two of Nell's passions: a love of food and a commitment to sustainable agriculture.

## Nell Newman: Snacking Her Way to Sustainable Agriculture

**A** lifelong environmentalist, Nell holds a degree in human ecology, has worked for the Environmental Defense Fund, and is former executive director of the Ventana Wilderness Sanctuary in California.

After years of reestablishing threatened peregrine falcons and bald eagles in California, she saw just how devastating pesticides could be. "The eggs of these birds



PHOTO CREDIT: LUCIANA PAMPALONE

Nell Newman

had such high levels of contaminants that they were too thin to hatch," she says.

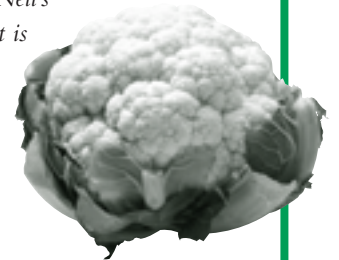
Since becoming an independent entity, Newman's Own Organics has followed in the parent company's footsteps and donated after-tax profits to charity

through a grant process. So far, Newman's Own Organics has given away more than \$2 million.

"I'm thrilled to be able to support sustainable agriculture on both ends," Nell says. "We use organic ingredients to support organic farmers, and then we donate profits to sustainable ag groups like the Organic Farming Research Foundation." 🌱

## Nell's Cauliflower & Parmesan Soup

*This soup originated during one of Nell's refrigerator-cleaning sprees. The result is a fantastically fresh-tasting, slightly lemony cream soup. Use fresh green peas if you can; they make a world of difference.*



2¼ cups water  
1 cup millet or rice, rinsed  
2 tablespoons butter or olive oil  
6 cups chicken or vegetable broth  
1 onion, chopped  
1 large head cauliflower, cut into bite-size pieces  
½ cup grated Parmesan cheese  
Juice of ½ lemon  
1 cup fresh or frozen peas  
Salt and pepper

- 🌱 Bring the water to a boil in a medium saucepan over high heat. Add the millet or rice. Reduce the heat to low, cover and cook until the grain is soft, 15 to 20 minutes. Set aside, covered, for 5 minutes, then fluff with a fork.
- 🌱 Meanwhile, melt the butter or heat the oil in a large soup pot over medium heat. Add the onion and cook for 5 minutes, or until lightly browned. Add the broth and cauliflower. Bring to a simmer over medium heat and cook until the cauliflower is tender, 8 to 10 minutes.
- 🌱 Transfer the mixture to a blender or food processor in batches and puree until smooth. Return to the pot and heat gently over low heat. Stir in the Parmesan, lemon juice, peas, and millet. Cook for 5 minutes. Taste and add salt and pepper as necessary. Makes 8 servings.