

# UF/IFAS Extension Hendry County

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## First Aid for Pesticide Poisoning – Bullet Points

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Pesticides are chemical compounds or biological agents that control pests. Pests include insects, mites, worms, fish, birds, animals, weeds, fungi, bacteria and viruses. Pests feed on crops and parasitize on livestock.

Pesticides are used widely in agriculture to control pests. It is estimated that on a worldwide basis, pests destroy up to a half of food supplies. Without pesticides the food losses could be even more significant. Pesticides increase work productivity, profits, and export incomes. Without world hunger would increase as would the price of food.

The word pesticide contains the element “-cide” that was borrowed from Latin and means “killer” or “killing”. Although modern agriculture would not be possible without the use of pesticides, many pesticides are toxic and may be dangerous to human health if used improperly. Because pesticides are toxic, they are potentially hazardous to humans, animals, other organisms, and the environment. Therefore, people who use pesticides or regularly come in contact with them must understand the relative toxicity, potential health effects, and preventative measures to reduce exposure to the products they use.

At the end of this module, the reader should:

- Be able to determine whether or not a person has been poisoned by a pesticide.
- Learn to recognize kinds of poisoning and their symptoms.
- Become familiar with chemical families and their toxicity.
- Recognize the signs of pesticide poisoning and know the first aid treatment for it.
- Know the importance of a pesticide first aid kit and what it should contain.
- Understand the importance of poison control centers and how to get immediate information on types of poisonings and their treatment.

All pesticides have the potential to be harmful to humans, animals, other living organisms, and the environment if used incorrectly. The key to reducing health hazards when using pesticides is to always limit your exposure by wearing PPE and use a low-toxicity pesticide when available. Reading the label and practicing safe work habits will minimize hazards from the use of pesticides.