

## Pesticide safety basics: How does the EPA protect consumers from harmful chemicals?

In our blogs, we often reference Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) safety levels or “tolerances” when discussing [pesticide] residues. But how are those levels established and what steps are taken to protect consumers? It’s time to revisit this as we see more groups promoting fear-based messaging and ignoring or dismissing these safety levels.

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EPA establishes tolerances for each crop use of a pesticide after developing a risk assessment that considers:

- The aggregate, non-occupational exposure from the pesticide (exposure through diet and drinking water and from pesticides used in and around the home).
- The cumulative effects from exposure to pesticides that have a common mechanism of toxicity (that is, two or more pesticide chemicals or other substances that cause a common toxic effect(s)).
- Whether there is increased susceptibility to infants and children or other sensitive subpopulations from exposure to the pesticide.
- Whether the pesticide produces an effect in people similar to an effect produced by a naturally occurring estrogen or produces other endocrine disruption-effects.

That’s right – EPA does look at cumulative exposures and accounts for infants and children, but consumers often hear the exact opposite, which is a key and important example of misinformation that is commonly perpetuated.

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