



Toxic when eaten or by touch?

Does the way I'm exposed matter that much?

Valerie was putting out mole bait when the bait got jammed in the device. She used her bare hands to loosen it, and then continued on her way. Later, she was applying a weed killer without gloves on, even though the [label](#) instructed her to use gloves. Some of the weed killer trickled onto her hands while she was spraying it. Valerie finished her work outside, came indoors and washed her hands.

Valerie was making her tea that evening and noticed itching and tightness in her hands. She wondered what could have caused this irritation. She thought back to when she was working in her garden and wondered if any of her activities could explain it. Valerie was concerned that she had been too careless.

The mole bait label said, "[DANGER-POISON](#)," while the weed killer label did not. Valerie decided she would call the number on the mole bait for more information before contacting her doctor. [Click here](#) to see what she found out from the [National Pesticide Information Center \(NPIC\)](#).



Call toll-free **1.800.858.7378**

8:00 am to 12:00 pm Pacific Time (PT), Monday - Friday

Visit us anytime on the web at npic.orst.edu



Take Home Message

Toxic when eaten or by touch?

Does the way I'm exposed matter that much?

The specialist explained that people can contact pesticides by getting them in the eyes, touching them, breathing them in, or eating them. These are called exposure routes. Sometimes, a pesticide is more toxic by one exposure route than it is by another.

Then the specialist told her about skin exposure and pesticides. He said that some pesticides absorb through the skin and get inside the body. If enough pesticide gets in the body, it can cause health effects in other areas of the body, not just the hands. However, for other pesticides, the skin acts as a protective barrier and they cannot get through. It depends on the type of chemicals in the product.

Valerie gave the specialist information about the mole bait and weed killer she used. The specialist said that her mole bait is highly toxic if eaten, but is low in toxicity if it touches the skin. Valerie said she did not touch her face, smoke, or eat before washing her hands, so she didn't think she swallowed any bait. Then the specialist said that the weed killer can cause skin irritation, even though it's low in toxicity if eaten.

Valerie realized that it's not only the toxicity of a pesticide that affects the user's risk, but also the exposure route. She decided to be cautious and wear gloves while using pesticides in her garden from now on.

There are many pesticides with different toxicities. Call NPIC if you would like toxicity and exposure information about the pesticides you may use.

