



## What should I do during mosquito spraying?

While Robin was driving to work one morning, she heard on the radio that her neighborhood would be sprayed to control mosquitoes. Robin was concerned and began asking around to find out more about pesticides. Robin called the public health department to ask about the spraying. Robin was given a product name, EPA registration number and the active ingredients. Robin did a web search and found an overwhelming amount of information. Some websites said that the active ingredients that were going to be used were perfectly safe, others said that they could make people sick or even cause cancer! So much information was contradictory that Robin didn't know what to think. Robin was not sure how to protect her family. So, Robin called the National Pesticide Information Center (NPIC) for help understanding the risk to her family.

[Click here](#) to find out what Robin learned when she called NPIC. Click on any of the underlined words or phrases for more information on that topic.





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The Specialist said the risk to Robin's family depends on two things: 1) how dangerous is the product and 2) how much contact her family or pets would have with the product. Then, to help Robin understand the potential danger to her family, the Specialist described how Robin could determine her own risk.

To determine how toxic or dangerous the product is, the NPIC Specialist told Robin about **signal words**. The Specialist said each product had one of three words on the label, either caution, warning or danger. The Specialist said that these words each mean different things. The word **CAUTION** means that the product is slightly toxic if you breathe it, eat it or get it on your skin. The signal word **WARNING** means moderately toxic and **DANGER** means highly toxic or poisonous. The Specialist discussed the **CAUTION** signal word on the product that was going to be sprayed in Robins community.

Next, the Specialist told Robin how ultra-low volume (ULV) sprays release very tiny droplets that stay in the air and kill flying mosquitoes that may carry public health diseases. The Specialist said that mosquito ULV applications only use small amounts of the pesticide active ingredients, usually less than a half a cup for an area the size of a football field [1].

Finally, the Specialist gave Robin options on how she could limit her family's contact with the pesticide.

- Stay indoors during the application
- Shut the windows and turn off the air conditioner during the application
- Bring outdoor pet food and water bowls inside
- Cover or remove children's outdoor toys
- Cover or remove small pools, fish ponds, and bird-baths
- Stay off the treated area until the pesticide is dry

Robin appreciated the information given by NPIC. After the call, Robin felt more informed and better able to manage her family's risk from mosquito spraying.

[1] <http://epa.gov/pesticides/health/mosquitoes/mosquito.htm>

