

Protect Your Health

Make Safe Pest Management Part of Your Aftercare



For more ideas on how to protect you and your family contact:

Maryland Pesticide Network

Visit www.mdpestnet.org or call 410.849.3909 for a free resource guide; *Pesticides: The Risks, Prevention and Healthier Choices*. This guide can also be downloaded from the MPN Website.

Beyond Pesticides

Visit www.beyondpesticides.org or call 202.543.5450 for information on safer pest management practices, pesticide fact sheets and pest control companies that practice IPM in your area.

Our Facility Practices Safe Pest Management

There are simple ways to keep pests (such as insects, mice and rats, mold, and weeds) out of your home and garden without using pesticides. Pesticides can pose a risk to your health and the environment. Safe pest management prevents and manages pest problems by using non-toxic methods first and least-toxic products last.

Our facility protects the health of our patients and employees by using a safe pest management approach in our buildings and natural practices on our facility grounds to make sure that patients, visitors, and employees are not exposed to pests or toxic pesticides. This method is called Integrated Pest Management- IPM.

What is the problem with pesticides?

- ❑ **Pesticides are chemicals that may cause or worsen:**
 - breathing problems
 - nausea
 - vomiting
 - diarrhea
 - numbness muscle and joint pain
 - dizziness
 - rashes
 - ear, nose and throat irritation
 - blurry vision
 - mental confusion
- ❑ **Pesticides may cause immune system damage:**
 - cancer
 - birth defects and miscarriages
 - asthma
 - diseases of the nervous system
 - low sperm counts and infertility
 - learning disabilities and behavioral problems

How our facility practices safe pest management

Our facility practices safe pest management by reducing the need for pesticides. We keep pests from entering our facility by keeping our facility clean and in good repair so that ants, rats, mice, roaches and flies cannot enter, find food, or find a place to breed. We always look for signs of pests, and use non-chemical methods to manage them whenever possible. If pests are still a problem after taking these steps, we only use least-toxic pesticides as a last resort.

Why should safe pest management be part of my aftercare plan?

While everyone benefits from safe pest management, babies, children, the elderly and those with existing illnesses or recovering from surgery and other medical treatments are at greater risk to the health effects of pesticides and diseases carried by pests.

How can I practice safe pest management at home to protect myself and my family?

- ❑ **Don't feed pests--prevent them!**
 - Put away food items and clean up crumbs
 - Wash dishes or put them in dishwasher as soon as possible
 - Store all food in well-sealed containers in the refrigerator or cabinets
 - Keep pet food in a container overnight or high off the floor
 - Fix leaky pipes
- ❑ **Seal them out**

Insects and spiders can squeeze through gaps that are only 1/16 inch. Mice can squeeze through a hole the size of a dime and rats can squeeze through holes the size of a quarter! Keep them out and save on energy costs:

 - Put door strips on all outside doors
 - Seal baseboards with caulk
 - Caulk cracks around windows and doors
 - Plug holes with caulk or steel wool (use gloves!)
 - Fix gaps and tears in window and door screens
 - Fill gaps around pipes under sinks and stoves

- ❑ **Store trash in clean garbage cans with lids**
- ❑ **Use spring traps, live capture traps, or sticky traps for rats and mice.**
- ❑ **Buy non-chemical pest control products, available at grocery and home improvement stores**
- ❑ **Natural land care**
 - Use a simple soil test, sold at home improvement stores or online, to find out what your soil needs for a healthy weed-free yard.
 - Aerate your lawn – this will let water, air and nutrients reach the roots of the grass. Home improvement stores sell tools for aerating.
 - Feed lawns and plants with compost or a natural organic fertilizer.
 - Set your lawn mower height to 3" as higher grass crowds out weeds.
 - Rake out thick layers of grass to prevent pests.

If you use a pest control company, make sure they practice IPM, and only use least-toxic pesticides as a last resort. If you use a lawn care company, you can ask for organic lawncare that

does not use pesticides. For any product that a company uses, ask for the Material Safety Data Sheet, which tells you about some of the health risks linked to the product.

Are there other ways to reduce my exposure to pesticides?

- ❑ **Buy safer products**

Pesticides are in cleaning and cosmetic products, flea and tick treatments and lice shampoos. Healthier choices are available at health food stores and some supermarkets.
- ❑ **Eat more organic**

Eating just a few organic foods a week helps reduce the pesticides in your body. Foods with the highest levels of pesticides are: peaches, strawberries, apples, spinach, nectarines, celery, pears, cherries, potatoes, bell peppers, raspberries and grapes.
- ❑ **Avoid sprayed areas**

Stay away from recently sprayed athletic fields, golf courses and other treated grounds. Don't sit, lie or play on areas recently sprayed. In Maryland, companies must put up yellow signs saying the area was recently treated with pesticides.



Store all food in well-sealed containers



Seal baseboards with caulk



Feed plants with compost or a natural fertilizer



Buy organic foods