

Pesticide Persistence

What's that You're Eating with Your Apple?

PRE-READING The word pesticide includes the latin root "cide." Think of other words that end in "cide"? What do you think "cide" means?



What Happens to Pesticides?

Agricultural industries use 1.2 billion pounds of pesticides every year. Pesticides are designed to kill the insects that might want to eat the same fruits and vegetables that we want to eat.

After the pesticide kills the pests, it is supposed to break down. Many pesticides break down in sunlight. Some are dissolved by water. Usually the pesticides break down to less toxic chemicals, but sometimes they are more toxic.

Scientists label the *persistence* of pesticides in the following way:

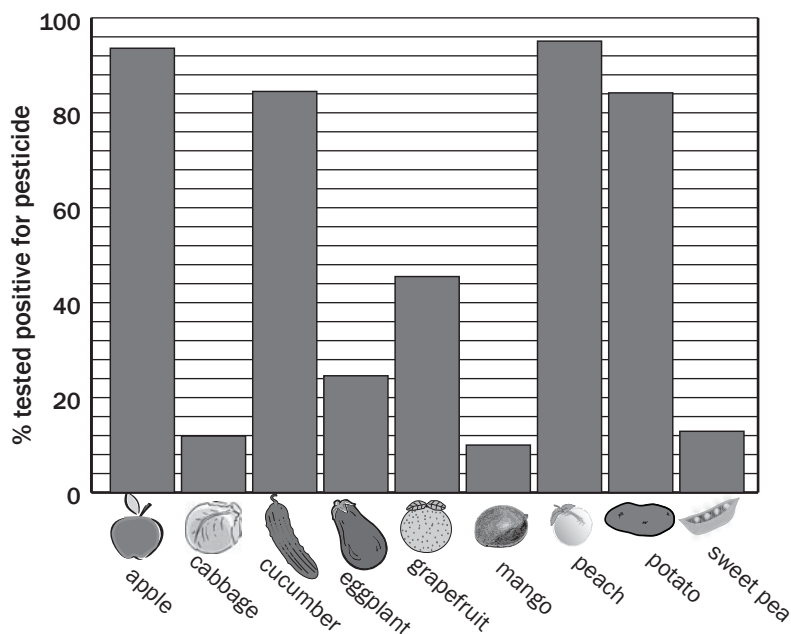
- Non persistent < 30 days
- Moderately persistent 30 - 100 days
- Persistent > 100 days

Persistent pesticides leave a residue on food. Any pesticide can be carried away by wind or rain or by people who touch the plants or the ground and carry the pesticides with them on their shoes and clothing. Farmworkers and their families are especially at risk.

Your Favorite Foods?

Circle the items on the graph below that you like to eat. The graph shows what percent of the time the food tested positive for pesticides.

Fruits and vegetables are the ultimate health foods. We are supposed to get 5 servings of them everyday! Don't stop eating fruits and vegetables, but do think about how to deal with the pesticide problem.



Apple Lovers Unite!

Are you upset to see that apples test positive for pesticides about 90% of the time? Another way of expressing that is as a ratio: 9 out of 10 times. How do apples compare with other foods?

What can you do if your favorite foods have high pesticide residue? Would washing and peeling help? Could you buy organic apples or choose a different fruit? Will you act to support changes in pesticide use?

Source: <www.ewg.org>