The Effects of Glyphosate on Children and How to Reduce Exposure Transcript

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Glyphosate and Health Risks Beyond Cancer

"The Effects of Glyphosate on Children and How to Reduce Exposure" Looking beyond cancer, could glyphosate, the broad-spectrum herbicide used around the world, contribute to metabolic disease in youth?

What about the impact of glyphosate exposure during pregnancy and preterm birth? Spoiler alert. The short answer: More research is needed. One of the largest studies on glyphosate exposure and preterm birth only included about 250 mothers.

So, while the study findings indicated that low-level exposures might increase the risk of premature birth, it was far from conclusive. As this scientist put it, perhaps the most important message from this study is that for the most commonly used herbicide in the world, the most conclusive epidemiologic study on preterm birth using biomarkers of exposure is based on only 250 people.

That is a decent size if this were a clinical trial, but it's not.

Evidence on Pregnancy, Preterm Birth, and Metabolic Effects

That is not to dismiss some intriguing studies published in highly respected scientific journals– prenatal exposure to glyphosate and higher odds of autism spectrum disorder, early life exposures to glyphosate linked with higher liver inflammation and metabolic syndrome in young adults.

And for that study, the glyphosate levels they recorded are on par with the general U. S. child population, demonstrating that there may be other relevant outcomes at exposure levels lower than what the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency defines as an acceptable dose.

Larger and longer-term studies are in the works. While it's valuable to have some of this initial evidence on health outcomes beyond cancer, the bottom line is: we need more.

So, beyond not walking through a recently sprayed agricultural field or spraying products with glyphosate on our home garden, what are the options for reducing our exposure?

An interventional trial found that pregnant women randomized to eat organic appeared to have less exposure to glyphosate, but only if they were compliant, and only if they lived more than about a third of a mile (0.

How to Reduce Exposure and Which Foods Matter Most

55 km) away from herbicide-sprayed agricultural fields. Those living closer to crops had about the same exposure, regardless what they ate. What foods have the highest glyphosate residues?

In a large survey of foods sold in grocery stores in Canada, where glyphosate is approved as a harvesting aid, the highest levels were observed in pulses and wheat products, whereas the lowest levels were in fresh fruits, vegetables, and surprisingly, corn products, presumably because the husk is removed.

Middle-of-the-road glyphosate levels were found on foods like whole grains, oats, and soy. But note that only 10% of soy samples even had detectable levels, similar to the low levels of detection found in fruits and vegetables.

And while this was a Canadian survey, about a third of the foods evaluated were imported; so, it provides a wider snapshot than just Canada. Similar findings were found in a Swiss study, with cereals and pulses considered the main contributors to dietary glyphosate intake, along with the U. S. study that found high levels in oat-based products.

While eating organic legumes and whole grains would presumably reduce glyphosate exposure, given the uncertainty of the evidence for glyphosate and the certainty of the evidence for the health-promoting effects of whole plant foods, we should continue to eat our beans, lentils, and whole grains, whether they are organic or not.