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## Pioneering Hospitals Ban Pesticides

Too Risky for Hospitals. Too Risky For Your Home, Too?



In what is being billed as a first-in-the-nation initiative, 13 hospitals in Maryland, including Johns Hopkins, will [stop using chemical pesticides](#) in order to eliminate any risk of toxic exposure to their staffs and patients, according to the Baltimore *Sun*.

Use of pesticides at the nation's 5,810 hospitals is widespread, according to surveys by Beyond Pesticides, an advocacy group that was involved in negotiating the pesticide ban in Maryland.

While the pesticides eliminated are legal, advocates have long criticized the regulation of many chemicals because studies point to some worrying links to cancer, neurological problems and other health risks. Pesticides are, as a rule, poisons, after all, and patients in hospitals could be more vulnerable to their effects, given their weakened health.

Instead of pesticides, the hospitals will use Integrated Pest Management -- a set of principles that can be applied to homes and businesses of all kinds. In the words of Beyond Pesticides:

"The focus of IPM is to prevent pest problems by reducing or eliminating sources of pest food, water, and shelter in hospitals and on their grounds and by maintaining healthy lawns and landscapes. The first approach to controlling a pest outbreak is improving sanitation, making structural repairs (such as fixing leaky pipes and caulking cracks), and using physical or mechanical controls such as screens, traps and weeders. A least hazardous chemical is used only when other strategies have failed."

For information about dealing with pests in the least-toxic way possible, check out Beyond Pesticides' [database of pest control methods](#).

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