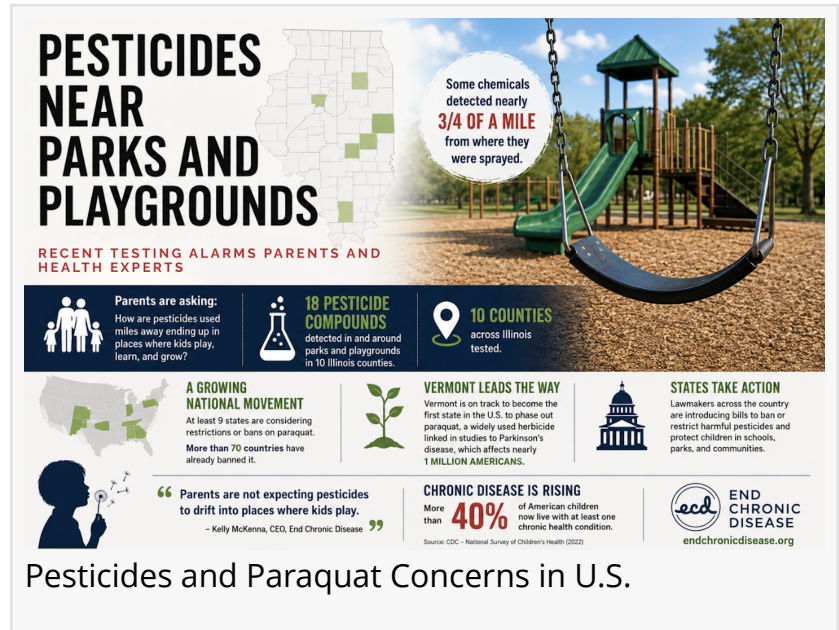


As States Debate Pesticide Bans, Testing Near Playgrounds Raises Alarm Among Parents and Health Experts

CHICAGO, IL, UNITED STATES, May 15, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Parents do not expect pesticides to show up near playgrounds, parks, and places where children spend time every day.

But recent testing in Illinois is raising new concerns for families after researchers detected 18 different pesticide compounds in and around parks and playgrounds across 10 counties throughout the state. Some chemicals were found nearly three quarters of a mile away from where they were originally sprayed.



The findings are drawing growing national attention as Vermont moves toward becoming the first state in the country to phase out paraquat, a widely used herbicide that has faced increasing scrutiny because of studies linking exposure to Parkinson's disease, a condition that affects nearly one million Americans.

Illinois lawmakers recently considered legislation requiring advance notice before pesticides are sprayed near schools and parks, along with a separate proposal to ban paraquat beginning in 2027, though neither measure now appears likely to advance this session.

According to the American Parkinson Disease Association, at least nine other states are considering restrictions or bans on paraquat, while more than 70 countries have already prohibited the herbicide over safety concerns.

What is making this moment different is that the conversation is no longer confined to farms and agricultural policy. Families are increasingly asking how chemicals used miles away are ending up in neighborhoods, schools, parks, and other everyday environments and why children may be exposed in places that are supposed to feel safe.

For [Kelly McKenna](#), CEO of the nonprofit [End Chronic Disease](#), the concern is one many parents immediately understand.

“How much exposure are kids getting in everyday places, and are we doing enough to protect them?” McKenna said. “Parents are not expecting pesticides to drift into places where kids play,” she added. “When people hear these chemicals are being detected near playgrounds and parks, it changes the conversation immediately because now it feels personal.”

McKenna and End Chronic Disease have spent recent years working with lawmakers in states across the country, both red and blue, on issues tied to children’s long term health, including screen time and cell phone limits in K-12 schools, school lunch and daily recess policies, and growing concern around environmental exposures linked to chronic disease and neurological harm.

Pesticides, including herbicides and fungicides used to control weeds, insects, and crop diseases, have received growing national attention over potential links to cancer, neurological disorders, reproductive harm, and other long term health concerns.

For many parents, questions about pesticides are becoming part of a broader concern about the environments children are growing up in and whether those environments are contributing to rising rates of chronic illness.

“We’ve gotten used to talking about chronic disease only after someone gets sick,” McKenna said. “But more families are starting to ask what kids are being exposed to every day and whether we should be more cautious before health problems develop.”

The conversation comes at a time when chronic disease among children in the United States continues to rise. More than 40 percent of American children now live with at least one chronic health condition, including asthma, obesity, diabetes, severe allergies, or autoimmune disorders.

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