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## IARC Monographs Volume 112: evaluation of five organophosphate insecticides and herbicides

**Lyon, France, 20 March 2015** – The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), the specialized cancer agency of the World Health Organization, has assessed the carcinogenicity of **five organophosphate pesticides**. A summary of the final evaluations together with a short rationale have now been published online in *The Lancet Oncology*, and the detailed assessments will be published as Volume 112 of the IARC Monographs.

### What were the results of the IARC evaluations?

The herbicide **glyphosate** and the insecticides **malathion** and **diazinon** were classified as *probably carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2A).

The insecticides **tetrachlorvinphos** and **parathion** were classified as *possibly carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2B).

### What was the scientific basis of the IARC evaluations?

The pesticides **tetrachlorvinphos** and **parathion** were classified as *possibly carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2B) based on convincing evidence that these agents cause cancer in laboratory animals.

For the insecticide **malathion**, there is *limited evidence of carcinogenicity* in humans for non-Hodgkin lymphoma and prostate cancer. The evidence in humans is from studies of exposures, mostly agricultural, in the USA, Canada, and Sweden published since 2001. Malathion also caused tumours in rodent studies. Malathion caused DNA and chromosomal damage and also disrupted hormone pathways.

For the insecticide **diazinon**, there was *limited evidence of carcinogenicity* in humans for non-Hodgkin lymphoma and lung cancer. The evidence in humans is from studies of agricultural exposures in the USA and Canada published since 2001. The classification of diazinon in Group 2A was also based on strong evidence that diazinon induced DNA or chromosomal damage.

For the herbicide **glyphosate**, there was *limited evidence of carcinogenicity* in humans for non-Hodgkin lymphoma. The evidence in humans is from studies of exposures, mostly agricultural, in the USA, Canada, and Sweden published since 2001. In addition, there is convincing evidence that glyphosate also can cause cancer in laboratory animals. On the basis of tumours in mice, the [United States Environmental Protection Agency](#) (US EPA) originally classified glyphosate as *possibly carcinogenic to humans* (Group C) in 1985. After a re-evaluation of that mouse study, the US EPA changed its classification to *evidence of non-carcinogenicity in humans* (Group E) in 1991. The US EPA Scientific Advisory Panel noted that the re-evaluated glyphosate results were still significant using two statistical tests recommended in the IARC [Preamble](#). The IARC Working Group that conducted the evaluation considered the significant findings from the US EPA report and several more recent positive results in concluding that there is *sufficient evidence of carcinogenicity* in experimental animals. Glyphosate also caused DNA and chromosomal damage in human cells, although it gave negative results in tests using bacteria. One study in community residents reported increases in blood markers of chromosomal damage (micronuclei) after glyphosate formulations were sprayed nearby.

### How are people exposed to these pesticides?

**Tetrachlorvinphos** is banned in the European Union. In the USA, it continues to be used on livestock and companion animals, including in pet flea collars. No information was available on use in other countries.

**Parathion** use has been severely restricted since the 1980s. All authorized uses were cancelled in the European Union and the USA by 2003.