

PSEP Pesticide Education Fact Sheet: Home Remedies to Control Pests

While people who promote making home remedies with familiar household ingredients to control pests are well intentioned, common claims about home remedies are inaccurate (*see Table 1 at right*).

Table 1: Claims made about home remedies	
Claim	Reality
Chemical-free	Everything is made of chemicals; for example, distilled white vinegar is about 5% acetic acid.
Pesticide-free	A chemical that controls pests is a pesticide (see What is a Pesticide?).
Nontoxic	All chemicals are toxic at some level of exposure (see Hazard vs Risk) and chemicals that kill pests often do so by toxic action.
Natural	Many home remedies include manmade products such as dish soap and hydrogen peroxide.

What about claims that home remedies are safer than store-bought pesticides? Though it might surprise you, home remedies can actually pose **MORE** risk to you, other people, and the environment (*see Table 2 at right*).

Table 2. The issue of assessing and avoiding risks associated with home remedies		
Home remedies can pose more risk because they:	Example:	In contrast, EPA-registered pesticides:
Often contain the same active ingredients as registered pesticides but lack proper safety instructions.	Kitchen vinegar contains acetic acid, as do some registered herbicides. But its label does not tell you it is corrosive to eyes, toxic to aquatic life, or how to avoid those risks when spraying it on weeds.	Undergo extensive risk assessments (see Pesticide Registration) and their label directions identify hazards and tell you how to reduce risk; for example requiring you wear goggles and avoid using a product near surface waters.
Have not been evaluated for risks specific to your intended site/pest.	Hydrogen peroxide has been tested for first aid use on human skin. But, when applied to garden vegetables to control fungi, it could harm anyone who eats the vegetables.	That can be applied to vegetables have undergone residue testing to ensure a reasonable certainty of no harm when you eat the vegetables.
May require heating or mixing chemicals, which is often dangerous.	Mixing vinegar and bleach results in <i>potentially fatal</i> chloramine gas.	Have label instructions warning you of any dangerous mixtures to avoid.
Are often ineffective and likely have negative impacts.	With little to no evidence of effectiveness, home-remedy mosquito repellents can irritate skin and still leave you vulnerable to mosquito-transmitted viruses.	Undergo testing for effectiveness against all pests they claim to control. Their labels provide the information necessary to ensure effectiveness, such as how much to apply and how often.

What's the Solution?

Use registered pesticides labeled for your intended site/pest combination and follow all use instructions and safety precautions on the label (see [How to Select a Pesticide](#)).

Note: Some states, including NY, have more conservative registration restrictions than the EPA. *You must make sure the product is registered in your state to avoid an illegal application.* [Check registration status for NY.](#)

Always read and follow the label when applying a pesticide. The label is the law.