New Study Links Roundup to Advanced Liver Disease Risk

The herbicide has been making headlines over allegations it could be linked to cancer—but scientists say there are other risks too.

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A new study on liver disease is stoking allegations that glyphosate-based herbicides, like Roundup, could be harmful to human health after finding links between the chemical and serious liver disorders, Care 2 reports.

Roundup, a chemical made by Monsanto and owned by Bayer, has been making headlines lately over numerous legal claims from plaintiffs alleging that the herbicide caused their cancer. Monsanto has lost multiple landmark cases in which juries have awarded several people with non–Hodgkin lymphoma millions of dollars in damages related to the potential link. Meanwhile, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) does not consider glyphosate to be harmful to human health. Might this latest research change that?

Published in the journal Clinical Gastroenterology and Hepatology by researchers at the University of California, the study essentially found a link between glyphosate-based herbicides and non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD),which can progress to the more serious non-alcoholic steatohepatitis (NASH), as well as cirrhosis and potentially liver cancer. While the study does not prove that glyphosate causes liver cancer because it was an “after the fact” study in 97 people who already had liver disease, it did show a link between high glyphosate levels in urine and NASH.

This isn’t the first time that glyphosate has been linked to liver disease. Researchers wrote that the study supports earlier research showing that even low exposures of the herbicide resulted in the development of NAFLD and NASH in animals within two years. Glyphosate is also classified as a “probable carcinogen” by the World Health Organization—a conclusion reached by its International Agency for Research on Cancer after a review of approximately 1,000 studies on the safety of the chemical.

Glyphosate-based herbicides—of which Roundup is the most common—are the most widely used around the world and are sprayed on many food crops and in parks, golf courses, playgrounds and alongside roads, railway tracks and more to combat the growth of weeds.

To learn more about the chemical and ongoing legal battles over its safety and effects on human health, click here.

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