How are tolerance limits established?

EPA sets tolerance limits for each pesticide and crop combination before allowing the use of a pesticide. In setting the tolerance limits, scientists must make a safety finding that the pesticide can be used with "reasonable certainty of no harm." To make this finding, scientists consider a number of factors:

- The toxicity of the pesticide and its break-down products.
- In the case of smoking, how much of the pesticide is transferred into inhaled smoke and what by-products might be formed by burning.
- How much of the pesticide is applied to the product and how often.
- How much of the pesticide (i.e., the residue) remains on the product by the time it is marketed and prepared.
- All possible routes of exposure to that pesticide (residues on other crops, as well as exposure from drinking water and residential exposure).

In order to set any health-based standards for marijuana a similar process would be necessary. Much of the most fundamental information about how much a person consumes, how they consume it, and how the pesticides are transferred to smoke are not available for marijuana.

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