

2,4-D

The term 2,4-D is used here to refer to the free acid, 2,4-dichlorophenoxyacetic acid (CAS No. 94-75-7). Commercial 2,4-D products are marketed as the free acid, alkali and amine salts and ester formulations. 2,4-D itself is chemically stable, but its esters are rapidly hydrolysed to the free acid. 2,4-D is a systemic herbicide used for control of broad-leaved weeds, including aquatic weeds. 2,4-D is rapidly biodegraded in the environment. Residues of 2,4-D in food rarely exceed a few tens of micrograms per kilogram.

Guideline value	0.03 mg/l (30 µg/l)
Occurrence	Levels in water usually below 0.5 µg/l, although concentrations as high as 30 µg/l have been measured
ADI	0–0.01 mg/kg body weight for the sum of 2,4-D and its salts and esters, expressed as 2,4-D, on the basis of a NOAEL of 1 mg/kg body weight per day in a 1-year study of toxicity in dogs (for a variety of effects, including histopathological lesions in kidneys and liver) and a 2-year study of toxicity and carcinogenicity in rats (for renal lesions)
Limit of detection	0.1 µg/l by gas–liquid chromatography with electrolytic conductivity detection
Treatment performance	1 µg/l should be achievable using GAC
Guideline value derivation	
• allocation to water	10% of upper limit of ADI
• weight	60 kg adult
• consumption	2 litres/day
Additional comments	The guideline value applies to 2,4-D, as salts and esters of 2,4-D are rapidly hydrolysed to the free acid in water.
Assessment date	1998
Principal references	FAO/WHO (1997) <i>Pesticide residues in food—1996 evaluations</i> WHO (2003) <i>2,4-D in drinking-water</i>

Epidemiological studies have suggested an association between exposure to chlorophenoxy herbicides, including 2,4-D, and two forms of cancer in humans: soft tissue sarcomas and non-Hodgkin lymphoma. The results of these studies, however, are inconsistent; the associations found are weak, and conflicting conclusions have been reached by the investigators. Most of the studies did not provide information on exposure specifically to 2,4-D, and the risk was related to the general category of chlorophenoxy herbicides, a group that includes 2,4,5-trichlorophenoxyacetic acid (2,4,5-T), which was potentially contaminated with dioxins. JMPR concluded that it was not possible to evaluate the carcinogenic potential of 2,4-D on the basis of the available epidemiological studies. JMPR also concluded that 2,4-D and its salts and esters are not genotoxic. The toxicity of the salts and esters of 2,4-D is comparable to that of the acid.