

LEWISITE FACT SHEET

What is a lewisite?

Lewisite is an oily and colorless liquid in its pure form. It can appear amber to black in its impure form. This chemical warfare agent is known as a blistering agent

How you can be exposed to lewisite?

It will depend on how close you are to the place where the lewisite was released. You can be exposed to the lewisite gas or liquid if it is released into the air, water or food.

What are the immediate symptoms of exposure to lewisite?

If you eat or drink contaminated food or water, you may experience diarrhea, nausea and vomiting. If your skin is exposed, it will result in pain and irritation within seconds to minutes, then redness within 15 to 30 minutes followed by blister formation within several hours. If your eyes are exposed, it may result in pain, swelling and tearing that could occur on contact. And, if there is exposure to the respiratory tract, you may have symptoms such as a runny nose, sneezing, hoarseness, bloody nose, sinus pain, shortness of breath and cough.

What are the long-term health effects of exposure to lewisite?

- Extensive breathing in of the vapors may cause chronic respiratory disease.
- Extensive eye exposure may cause permanent blindness.

What should I do if I think I have been exposed to lewisite?

Leave the area quickly and get to fresh air. If you think you have been exposed, remove your clothing and quickly wash your entire body with soap and water. If your eyes are burning or your vision is blurred, rinse them with plain water for 10 to 15 minutes. If you wear contact lenses, remove them before rinsing your eyes. Place your contaminated clothes and contact lenses into a plastic bag and seal. Place the bag into a second plastic bag and seal. **Call 911 for medical attention and removal of the contaminated items. Do not drive yourself to the hospital as you may become very ill on your way.**

Where can I get more information on lewisite?

Regional poison control center (800) 222-1222

www.bt.cdc.gov/

www.dshs.state.tx.us

www.state.nj.us/health/eoh/rtkweb/rtkhsfs.htm

Source of Information

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

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www.hcphe.org