

SULFUR MUSTARD FACT SHEET

What is sulfur mustard?

Sulfur mustard is a man-made chemical warfare agent known as a blister agent. Sulfur mustard sometimes smells like garlic, onions, or mustard and sometimes it does not have an odor. This blister agent can come in the form of a vapor, an oily-textured liquid, or a solid. It can last from 1 to 2 days in the environment under average weather conditions and weeks to months under very cold conditions.

How you can be exposed to sulfur mustard?

When sulfur mustard is released into the air as a vapor, a person can be exposed to it through inhalation, skin or eye contact. You can be exposed through touching or drinking the contaminated water, if it is released into the water.

How soon does an exposed person show symptoms?

The symptoms will depend on the route, amount and the time frame (2 to 24 hours) of exposure to the sulfur mustard. This agent breaks down slowly in the body, especially if you have been constantly exposed to it. You may not know right away that you were exposed.

What are the immediate symptoms?

If ingested, you can have stomach pain, diarrhea, fever, nausea and vomiting. If inhaled, you can have runny nose, sneezing, hoarseness, bloody nose, sinus pain, shortness of breath, and cough within 12 to 24 hours of a mild exposure and within 2 to 4 hours of a severe exposure. If absorbed, your skin may turn red and start to itch within 2 to 48 hours after exposure and then eventually change to a yellowing blister. The eyes may become irritated, painful, swell and teary, which can occur within 3 to 12 hours of a mild to moderate exposure. If there is harsh exposure, the symptoms may occur within 1 to 2 hours and include severe pain or blindness (lasting up to 10 days).

What are the long-term health effects?

Long term exposure to a sulfur mustard agent can cause permanent blindness and skin burning that can be fatal. If you continue to breathe in the vapors, this can cause repeated chronic respiratory disease, infections or cancer which may lead to death.

What should you do if you think you have been exposed to sulfur mustard?

Though no antidote exists for sulfur mustard, exposure is usually not fatal.

If you think you have been exposed, move quickly to an area where fresh air is available. Remove your clothing by cutting them off the body; if possible do not pull the clothes over your head. Quickly wash your entire body with large amounts of 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 contacts, wash your hands after removing contaminated clothes and then remove the contacts before rinsing your eyes.

If you wear eye glasses, remove and wash them with soap and water. You can put your eyeglasses back on after you wash them. Place your contaminated clothes and contact lenses into a plastic bag and seal. Place the bag into a second plastic bag and seal. If sulfur mustard has been ingested, do not drink fluids or induce vomiting. **Call 911 for medical attention right away and removal of the contaminated items. Do not drive yourself to the hospital as you may become very ill on your way.**

Where you can get more information on sulfur mustard?

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)