

CHLORINE FACT SHEET

What is chlorine?

Chlorine is a yellow-green gas that stays close to the ground and spreads rapidly. This gas is recognized by its overpowering, nauseating smell, which is like the odor of bleach. The strong smell may provide an adequate warning to people that they have been exposed. Chlorine is used in industry and found in some household products.

How can you be exposed to chlorine?

Your exposure to chlorine will depend on how close you are to the place where it was released.

If chlorine gas or liquid is released, you may be exposed through breathing contaminated air, eating contaminated food or touching or drinking contaminated water.

What are the immediate symptoms of exposure to chlorine?

During or immediately after exposure to dangerous concentrations of chlorine, the following signs and symptoms may develop:

- Coughing
- Chest tightness
- Burning sensation in the nose, throat, and eyes
- Watery eyes
- Blurred vision
- Nausea and vomiting
- Burning pain, redness, and blisters on the skin if exposed to gas, skin injury similar to frostbite if exposed to liquid chlorine
- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath (may appear immediately if high concentrations of chlorine gas are inhaled, or may be delayed if low concentrations of chlorine gas are inhaled)
- Fluid in the lungs (pulmonary edema) within 2 to 4 hours

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

Long-term complications from chlorine exposure are not found in people who survive a sudden exposure unless they suffer complications such as pneumonia during therapy. Chronic bronchitis may develop in people who develop pneumonia during therapy.

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

If you think that you have been exposed to chlorine, leave the area and get to fresh air. Remove your clothing that has liquid on it. Place the items in a plastic bag and seal. Put the bag into a second bag and seal. As quickly as possible, wash your entire body with soap and water. If your eyes are burning or vision is blurred, rinse your eyes with plain water for 10 to 15 minutes. If you wear glasses, wash them with soap and water. You can put your eyeglasses back on after you wash them. If you wear contact lenses, remove them and place them with the contaminated clothing inside a plastic bag and seal. If you have ingested chlorine, do not induce vomiting or drink fluids. **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.**

How is the chlorine exposure treated?

There is no antidote that exists for chlorine exposure. Treatment consists of removing the chlorine from the body as soon as possible and providing supportive medical care in a hospital setting.

Where can I get more information on chlorine?

Regional poison control center (1-800-222-1222)

www.bt.cdc.gov

www.dshs.state.tx.us

Source of Information

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)