

CHEMICAL POISONING AND CHEMICAL BURNS

Chemical Poisoning

Chemical poisoning is a serious life-threatening emergency to the person/s affected. You should be aware of the symptoms of chemical poisoning and what to do if you or someone you know has been exposed. The following are symptoms associated with chemical poisoning whether by swallowing, touching, or breathing:

- difficulty breathing
- headache or blurred vision
- irritated eyes, skin, throat
- clumsiness or lack of coordination
- stomach cramps or diarrhea
- changes in skin color
- dizziness
- unusual behavior

If you think you have been exposed to a toxic chemical, call the poison control center, 911, or the operator, whichever applies to your area. If you see or smell something that you think may be dangerous, or find someone who has been overcome with toxic vapors, your first job is to make sure that you don't become a victim. If you remain in a dangerous area and become injured or unconscious, you cannot help yourself or anyone else.

In a chemical poisoning emergency...

- Send someone to call EMS, immediately.
- Tell the operator the location of the emergency and the phone number from where you are calling.
- Describe what has happened, how many people are involved and what is being done to help.
- Stay on the phone until the operator tells you to hang up.

If you are trained in First Aid or CPR, and feel confident that you are not in danger, check the person for life-threatening injuries. Administer appropriate treatment, and then deal with the chemical injuries.

Chemical Burns

A chemical burn can be minor or life threatening, but proper treatment can reduce the chance of infection and the damage caused by contact with the chemical...

- Remove any affected clothing or jewelry from the injury.
- Use lots of cool running water to flush the chemical from the skin until emergency help arrives. The running water will dilute the chemical fast enough to prevent the injury from getting worse. Use the same treatment for eye burns and remove any contact lenses. Be careful to flush the eye from the nose outward.
- If no large amount of clean water is available, gently brush the chemical off the skin and away from the victim and you. If the chemical is on the face, neck or shoulders, ask the victim to close his or her eyes before brushing off the chemical.
- Cover the wound very loosely with a dry, sterile or clean cloth so that the cloth will not stick to the wound. Do not put any medication on the wound.
- Seek medical attention immediately.

If you believe you have been contaminated with a chemical, call the Poison Control Center, 911 or the operator immediately. If medical help is not immediately available, remove your clothing starting from the top and working your way down to your socks. Use care not to touch your contaminated clothing to your bare skin. Place your clothing in a plastic bag so it cannot contaminate other people or things. Take a thorough shower to wash any chemical away. Re-dress in clean clothing and go for medical help at your first opportunity.