

Tabun/GA (Nerve Agent)



What is Tabun?



Tabun (also known as “GA”), is a man-made chemical warfare agent classified as a nerve agent. Nerve agents are the most toxic and rapidly acting of the known chemical warfare agents. It was originally developed as a pesticide in Germany in 1936. Tabun is a clear, colorless, tasteless liquid with a faint fruity odor. It can become a vapor if heated and is not found naturally in the environment.

Exposure

There are several ways that people can be exposed to tabun. The most likely way is for people to breathe air containing tabun gas or droplets. People also can be exposed when liquid tabun or droplets come into contact with the skin or eyes. Because tabun mixes easily with water, it has the potential to be used as a poison for food and water supplies. Clothing from a contaminated person can release vapors for about 30 minutes after exposure, thus endangering people who were not in an original area of release.

Health Effects

Effects from inhaling tabun gas are usually immediate, while effects from exposure to liquid tabun may be immediate or delayed.

For immediate assistance, call the Poison Control Center Hotline: 1-800-222-1222.

Tabun and other nerve agents work by interfering with an enzyme critical to the normal control of nerve impulses to muscles, glands and other nerve cells in the brain, resulting in numerous reactions.

Signs and symptoms of low to moderate exposure include:

- Nausea and vomiting
- Abdominal cramps and diarrhea
- Small, pinpoint pupils
- Teary eyes or runny nose
- Blurred vision and aching eyes
- Excessive drooling and sweating
- Uncontrolled urination
- Tightness in the chest
- Slow or fast heart rate
- Abnormally low or high blood pressure
- Drowsiness and/or confusion

Even a tiny droplet of nerve agent on the skin can cause sweating and muscle twitching where the agent touched the skin.

Exposure to a large dose of tabun by any route may result in these additional health effects:

- Loss of consciousness
- Convulsions
- Paralysis
- Respiratory failure possibly leading to death

Mild or moderately exposed people usually recover completely. Severely exposed people are not likely to survive.

Treatment

If a person has been exposed to tabun, move quickly to an area where fresh air is available. Remove clothing by cutting off the body; do not pull clothes over the head. Quickly wash entire body with large amounts of soap and water.

If the eyes are burning or vision is blurred, rinse with plain water for 10 to 15 minutes. If wearing contacts, wash hands after removing clothes then remove contacts before rinsing eyes. If wearing glasses, remove and wash them with soap and water. It is okay to put glasses back on after they have been washed. Place contaminated clothes and contact lenses into a plastic bag and seal. Place bag into a second bag and seal.

If tabun has been ingested, do not drink fluids and do not induce vomiting. Call 911 for medical attention right away after removal of contaminated items. If exposed, do not drive to the hospital because of the risk of becoming very ill on the way. It is possible to recover from tabun exposure if an antidote is available and used quickly.



For more sources of information on this topic visit or contact:

ST. CLAIR COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT www.scchealth.co

MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES www.michigan.gov/mdhhs

CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION www.cdc.gov

MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY HEALTH TOXICS AND HEALTH HOTLINE: 1-800-648-6942

MICHIGAN OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY ADMINISTRATION (MIOSHA): 517-322-1814

AGENCY FOR TOXIC SUBSTANCES AND DISEASE REGISTRY: www.atsr.cdc.gov 1-888-422-8737