

Fact Sheet

VX

(Nerve Agent)



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What is VX?



VX is a manmade 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 in the United Kingdom in the early 1950's. VX is an odorless, tasteless, oily liquid that is amber in color and very slow to evaporate.

Exposure

A person can be exposed by drinking water, eating food, or touching soil that has been contaminated with VX. If VX is released into the air, a person can be exposed through inhaling, skin, or eye contact. Clothing contaminated with VX vapor can release the nerve agent for about 30 minutes after contact, which can lead to the exposure of other people.

Health Effects

If a person is exposed to VX vapor, symptoms would appear within a few seconds after exposure. If a person were exposed to VX liquid, symptoms could appear within a few minutes or as long as 18 hours after exposure. People exposed to a low or moderate dose of VX by inhalation, ingestion, or skin absorption may experience some or all of the following symptoms within seconds to hours of exposure:

- Abnormally low or high blood pressure
- Blurred vision or eye pain
- Chest tightness
- Confusion
- Diarrhea and/ or abdominal pain
- Drooling and excessive sweating
- Drowsiness or weakness
- Headache
- Increased urination
- Nausea or vomiting
- Rapid breathing or cough
- Slow or fast heart rate
- Small, pinpoint pupils
- Watery eyes or runny nose

A person may not know that they have been exposed to VX because it has no odor. Even a tiny drop of nerve agent on the skin can cause sweating and muscle twitching where the agent touched the skin. Exposure to a large dose of VX by any route may result in these additional health effects:

- Convulsions
- Loss of consciousness
- Paralysis
- Respiratory Failure possible leading to death

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

Treatment

Recovery from VX exposure is possible with treatment, but antidotes available must be used quickly to be effective!

If a person has been exposed to VX, 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 VX 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.



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) www.michigan.gov/miosha

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