



NERVE AGENTS

What are NERVE AGENTS?

Nerve agents are chemical warfare agents that belong to a group of chemicals known as organophosphates. Some commonly used insecticides belong to this group. They are colorless to amber-colored, tasteless liquids that may evaporate to create a gas. The gas attacks the brain and nervous system, making a person unable to function. Nerve agents used as warfare agents include sarin, tabun, soman, and VX.

Exposure:

Primary route is by either inhalation or absorption through the skin or eyes.

Signs and symptoms:

Symptoms depend on the route and amount of exposure. Signs include reduction in the size of pupils, chest tightness, increased saliva and other body fluids, diarrhea, loss of memory and concentration, and loss of consciousness. Respiratory arrest can also occur. Other symptoms include muscle cramps, runny nose, eye pain, blurred vision, sweating, muscle spasms, seizures, and paralysis.

What can you do?

Emergency response leaders may direct people to evacuate, or “shelter in place.” If you are in an area where a nerve agent was released, leave the area immediately and get to higher ground.

Treatment:

Remove contaminated clothing immediately and rinse skin with fresh water to dilute chemical. Supportive hospital care and medication to treat seizures and low heart rate may be necessary.

Diagnosis:

Based on known or suspected exposure.

Whom do you call?

Division of Public Health: 1-888-295-5156.

Additional information:

Visit the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry website: <https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/>.

Emergency Medical Services and Preparedness Section
24/7 Emergency Contact Number: 1-888-295-5156
Contact Number: 302-223-2999

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