



BENZENE (C₆H₆)

What is BENZENE?

Benzene is an industrial chemical and is considered a chemical warfare agent. Benzene is a highly flammable liquid. Benzene's vapor is heavier than air and may collect in low-lying areas. It has a sweet odor, which usually provides adequate warning of dangerous levels.

Signs and Symptoms:

Symptoms depend on the amount and route of exposure. Benzene is very irritating to the skin, eyes and lungs. It can cause irregular heartbeat and loss of consciousness to those directly exposed. Longer-term exposure may cause anemia, changes to the immune system and leukemia. High concentrations can affect the skin, brain, lungs, stomach and intestines.

Exposure:

Benzene is rapidly absorbed into the body after being inhaled or swallowed. It can also be absorbed through the skin.

What can you do?

Emergency response leaders may direct people to evacuate or "shelter in place." If benzene was released into the air, get fresh air by leaving the area where the benzene was released. This is a good way to reduce the possibility of death from exposure to benzene in the air.

Treatment:

No specific treatment or antidote. Remove contaminated clothing immediately and wash exposed skin/eyes. Supportive hospital care may be necessary.

Diagnosis:

Based on known or suspected exposure.

Whom do you call?

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

For more information:

Visit the CDC website for Emergency Preparedness and Response: www.bt.cdc.gov.