



RICIN

- What is RICIN?** Ricin is a poison made from the waste left over from processing castor beans. The poison can be made into powder, pellets, a mist, or it can be dissolved in water or weak acid. It would take a deliberate act to make ricin and use it as a poison. Accidental exposure to ricin is highly unlikely.
- Transmission:** Ricin poisoning can occur by inhalation of ricin mist or powder, ingestion of ricin-contaminated food or water, or by injecting a poison ricin pellet through the skin. Ricin poisoning is not contagious. It cannot be spread from person to person.
- Signs and Symptoms:** Symptoms depend on whether ricin was inhaled, swallowed, or injected.
Inhaled: Initial symptoms begin within a few hours (depending on how much was inhaled). Symptoms include difficulty breathing, fever, cough, nausea, and chest tightness. Heavy sweating may occur as well as fluid accumulating in the lungs. Low blood pressure and increasing difficulty breathing may occur, leading to death.
Ingestion: Symptoms typically occur in less than six hours (depending on how much was ingested). Irritation and sores in mouth, throat, and stomach are likely. Other symptoms include nausea, vomiting, stomach pain, and bloody diarrhea. Hallucinations, seizures, and bloody urine are possible.
Injected: There is skin and muscle death at the entry site; other symptoms as above are possible.
Skin and eye exposure: redness and pain of the skin and eyes.
- Treatment:** There is no cure for ricin poisoning. The most important factor is getting ricin off or out of the body as quickly as possible, and being treated at the hospital as soon as possible.
- Diagnosis:** Laboratory testing.
- Prevention:** Be aware of your surroundings. If a large number of people are becoming ill, leave the area to get fresh air.
- What can you do?** If you think you were exposed to ricin, remove your clothing, rapidly wash your entire body with soap and water, and call 911. Get to fresh air and move away from the release area.
- Whom do you call?** Division of Public Health, Office of Infectious Disease Epidemiology:
1-888-295-5156.
- For more information:** Visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website:
www.emergency.cdc.gov/agent/ricin/facts.

24/7 Emergency Contact Number: 1-888-295-5156

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