
Section 15



Emergency Action

First Aid

Although pesticides can be dangerous, they are unlikely to harm you if:

- < you handle the products carefully
- < you follow label directions
- < you wear all the protective clothing and equipment you need.
(See the Protective Clothing and Equipment section in this manual)

However, in spite of all precautions, pesticide accidents can still happen.

Learn the signs of pesticide poisoning and know what to do in an emergency. Remember that the symptoms of a fatal pesticide poisoning can look like the flu or heat exhaustion. If someone has been working with pesticides and you see any possible symptoms of pesticide poisoning, take emergency action immediately. It is always better to be safe, than sorry.

Prompt action may save a life.

Read The Label



First Aid information is available on every pesticide label.

The details and location of first aid information will change for each pesticide, so be sure you read each label carefully.

- < **Read the First Aid section of the label before you begin to handle any pesticide.**
- < Show someone else the First Aid label information before you begin to handle the product.
- < **Take the label or container with you** if you take a pesticide poisoning victim to the hospital. Remember not to put the pesticide container in the passenger compartment for transport.

- < **Provide the label or container to emergency personnel** when you reach the hospital or if they come to the accident scene. The PCP Act registration number identifies the product. Some product manufacturers list a 24 hour emergency number on the label.

First Aid is the help that you can give at the scene, until the victim receives professional medical help.

If you have another person available to help, send them to call for emergency help immediately, while you begin these first aid steps:

If an Accident Happens.

1. **Always protect yourself from injury first.** Don't become another victim. Always put on protective clothing and equipment before you enter a contaminated area or handle a contaminated victim.

2. **Check to see if the victim is breathing.**

If the victim is not breathing:

- < Straighten the victim's airway and check for breaths.
- < If the victim does not begin to breathe, administer artificial respiration until the victim begins to breathe on his/her own.
- < Do not contaminate yourself, especially if the victim has pesticide or vomit around his face or mouth. Use a face shield airway with a one way valve. Do not breathe the exhaled air from the victim.
- < Perform CPR if the victim's pulse disappears. You should only perform CPR if you are trained to do so.

If the victim is breathing, but unconscious:

- < Place the victim in the recovery position (on the side with the head turned slightly to one side). If the victim vomits, try to keep the airway clear.

3. **Stop the exposure to the pesticide.** Move the victim away from the contaminated area. Remove all contaminated clothing. Use soap and water to wash any skin exposed to the pesticide.

4. **Check the Four Basic Facts:**

- < **Identify the pesticide.** Look for the label, container or left-over pesticide.
- < **Quantity** - How much product was the victim exposed to?
- < **Route of entry** - How did the pesticide enter the body? Did it enter through the mouth, skin/eyes or lungs?

- < **Time period** - How much time has passed since the victim was exposed to the pesticide, and how long was the exposure? Were the symptoms immediate or did the poisoning occur as a result of using the pesticide over a longer period of time?

Don't waste time. If you can't answer these questions quickly, be ready to tell emergency personnel whatever you can.

5. **Call an ambulance or the Poison Information Centre.**
6. **Start the First Aid treatment** appropriate for the route of entry.
7. **Make sure the patient gets medical attention.** First aid is **not** a substitute for professional medical help.

First Aid Treatment for Pesticide Accidents

The first aid treatment you use will depend on the route of entry of the pesticide. The victim may have breathed the pesticide into the lungs (inhalation), swallowed it (oral ingestion), or taken it in through the skin or eyes (dermal exposure).

The following information will help you deal with pesticide accidents. These are general guidelines. **Always check the label** of the product the victim was exposed to for extra first aid directions.

If Pesticide Contacts Skin

- < Remove contaminated clothing.
- < Rinse skin with plenty of water.
- < Wash skin, hair, nails, and underneath nails thoroughly with lots of soap and water. Repeat.
- < Dry victim and wrap him/her in a blanket or other clean material.
- < Get medical attention.

For Chemical Burns on Skin

- < Remove the chemical immediately to stop the burning. Do not wait for clothing to be removed.
- < Brush dry chemicals off skin and clothes and away from the victim, then rinse the affected area with lots of water.
- < For liquid chemicals, rinse affected area with large amounts of water.
- < Keep flooding the area with water while removing the victim's clothing. Do not remove clothing that is stuck to the skin.
- < Immerse the burned area in ice water or cover with an ice pack.
- < Cover with a loosely applied clean cloth.
- < Get medical attention.

Do Not: touch the burned area
remove clothing stuck to the skin
break blisters
use ointments or lotions

If Pesticide Contacts Eyes

- < Hold the victim's eyelids open and wash the eyes with large amounts of clean running water.
- < Wash for fifteen minutes or more.
- < Get medical attention.

If Pesticide was Inhaled (dusts, vapours, gases)

- Always put on protective equipment before you enter a contaminated area.
- < Move the victim to fresh air.
 - < Loosen tight clothing.
 - < Give artificial respiration if needed to keep the victim breathing.
Caution: If the victim's face or mouth has pesticide or vomit on it, protect yourself when you perform artificial respiration, e.g. use a face shield airway with a one-way valve. Do not breathe the exhaled air from the victim.
 - < Get medical attention.

If Pesticide Entered the Mouth but was not Swallowed

- < Call the Poison Information Centre immediately.
- < If the victim is conscious and not convulsing, rinse the mouth with large quantities of water. Wipe the mouth with a damp cloth and brush teeth thoroughly.

If Pesticide was Swallowed

- < Call the Poison Information Centre immediately.
- < Check the pesticide label for first aid information.
Caution: If the first aid section of the label tells you to induce vomiting, confirm this first with the Poison Information Centre before you take action.

Never Induce Vomiting if:

- < The victim is unconscious or in a coma.
- < The victim is in convulsions.
- < The victim has swallowed a pesticide containing petroleum products, e.g. Emulsifiable Concentrates. If a pesticide containing petroleum products is aspirated (inhaled into the lungs during vomiting) it will cause respiratory distress and possibly death.
- < The victim has swallowed a corrosive poison (i.e. strong acid or base/alkaline products). Strong acids and bases/alkalines will burn the throat and mouth. They will also damage the lungs if the victim aspirates during vomiting.
- < The victim has swallowed any pesticide belonging to one of the following pesticide classifications:
 - **chlorinated hydrocarbons**
(also called organochlorine insecticides)
e.g. Lindane, endosulfan (THIODAN)
 - **organophosphorus insecticides**
e.g. diazinon, azinphos-methyl (GUTHION)
 - **carbamates**
e.g. carbaryl (SEVIN), bendiocarb (TRUMPET)
 - **concentrated dinitrophenols**
e.g. dinoseb

To Induce Vomiting

A. Under the direction of the Poison Information Centre

Give syrup of ipecac - 15 mL (1 tablespoon) to children, 30 mL (2 tablespoons) to adults. Follow with one to two glasses of water or fruit juice. Repeat in fifteen minutes if the victim does not vomit. You can buy one-dose bottles of syrup of ipecac at most drugstores.

Caution: Do not give syrup of ipecac to children under 12 months of age.

B. Without the direction of the Poison Information Centre.

Do not give syrup of ipecac if you can't reach a phone and speak to someone at the Poison Information Centre. If the victim is conscious and is not convulsing, you can give the victim several glasses of warm water to drink. If this does not work, tell the victim to tickle the back of his throat with his **own** finger. Vomiting caused by tickling is usually not complete. Be sure that the victim goes to a hospital immediately.

Keep the victim lying down with his head below the level of his feet. This position allows the vomit to drain away from air passages.

If you do not know what the poison is, be sure to collect some of the vomit for the doctor.

Emergency Numbers



The Poison Information Centre number is listed in the front page of the telephone book.

There are two Poison Information Centres in Ontario. They provide information on all types of poisonings, including pesticide poisonings:

TORONTO: Hospital for Sick Children
(416) 813-5900
1-800-268-9017

OTTAWA: Children's Hospital for Eastern Ontario
(613) 737-1100
1-800-267-1373

Advice is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Be Prepared



Learn how to use pesticides safely to prevent accidents - and always be prepared for an emergency.

- < **Read the label** before you use any pesticide product. Pay special attention to the product name, the PCP Act number, the guarantee, the precautions and the first aid section. Be sure you know the signs of poisoning for the products you are using.
- < **Let someone else know - when, what, and where...** Be sure that someone always knows when you are working with pesticides and how long you expect to be. Make sure that they know what products you are using, and where you are working with them. If you do not return at the expected time someone can then check to see if you have had an accident.
- < **Post emergency telephone numbers** near all telephones.
- < **Keep plenty of clean water, soap and paper towels** close by when you work with pesticides.
- < **Keep extra gloves and a clean coverall handy** in case you spill pesticide onto your clothing.
- < **Keep two bottles of syrup of ipecac** in your first aid kit for emergencies.
- < **Take a First Aid Course.** In most communities, St. John Ambulance offers courses to help you prepare for any kind of emergency. You can also ask your doctor or the local hospital for information.

Review Questions

1. When a pesticide accident occurs and you must enter the contaminated area, what is the **first** thing you should do?

2. If a pesticide contacts your eyes, what should you do?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

3. If a pesticide spills onto your arm, you should:

- a) remove contaminated clothing and bandage your arm and apply a cold compress
- b) rinse contaminated clothing and skin with plenty of water
- c) rinse contaminated clothing and cover your skin with lotion or ointment
- d) remove contaminated clothing and wash skin thoroughly with lots of soap and water

4. For chemical burns on the skin, wash the affected area with large amounts of water, then use ointment, grease or powder on the burns.

TRUE

FALSE

5. List the proper first aid procedures you should follow when helping a victim who has breathed in pesticide dusts, vapours or gases.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. You would induce vomiting if the victim had swallowed a petroleum product.

TRUE

FALSE

