

## Heptachlor and Heptachlor Epoxide Patient Information Sheet

This handout provides information and follow-up instructions for persons who have been exposed to heptachlor or heptachlor epoxide.

### **What are heptachlor and heptachlor epoxide?**

Heptachlor is a white or tan crystalline or waxy solid with a camphor-like odor. Heptachlor epoxide is a white crystalline solid. Heptachlor is an insecticide that can be used only for controlling fire ants in power transformers. Heptachlor epoxide is formed by the oxidation of heptachlor in biological systems.

### **What immediate health effects can be caused by exposure to heptachlor?**

The general public is not likely to be exposed to heptachlor at levels high enough to cause adverse health effects. However exposure to relatively high levels of heptachlor could result in effects on the central nervous system (hyperexcitability, convulsions, or seizures) and liver damage. Generally, the more serious the exposure, the more severe the symptoms.

### **Can heptachlor poisoning be treated?**

There is no antidote for heptachlor, but its effects can be treated and most exposed persons get well. Seriously exposed persons may need to be hospitalized.

### **Are any future health effects likely to occur?**

Seizures may appear as long as 48 hours after exposure to heptachlor and may recur over several days. Therefore, it is important to tell your doctor that you have been exposed to heptachlor or heptachlor epoxide. The EPA and International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) have classified heptachlor as a possible human carcinogen, based on increased incidences of liver tumors in mice fed heptachlor for a lifetime.

### **What tests can be done if a person has been exposed to heptachlor or heptachlor epoxide?**

Laboratory tests can detect heptachlor and heptachlor epoxide in blood, fat, breast milk, and body tissues after exposure to high levels. Most often, the test for heptachlor epoxide is used because heptachlor is quickly changed into heptachlor epoxide in your body. However, heptachlor is both a breakdown product and a component of chlordane, another pesticide. So if heptachlor and heptachlor epoxide are measured in the blood, the actual exposure could have been to chlordane. A few days after exposure, blood levels of heptachlor and heptachlor epoxide decrease and can no longer be measured. Therefore, blood tests for these chemicals must be done within a short period after exposure. Levels in fat can be measured for a much longer period after exposure.

### **Where can more information about heptachlor and heptachlor epoxide be found?**

More information about heptachlor and heptachlor epoxide can be obtained from your regional poison control center; your state, county, or local health department; the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR); your doctor; or a clinic in your area that specializes in occupational and environmental health. If the exposure happened at work, you may wish to discuss it with your employer, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), or the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). Ask the person who gave you this form for help in locating these telephone numbers.

## Follow-up Instructions

Keep this page and take it with you to your next appointment. Follow *only* the instructions checked below.

Call your doctor or the Emergency Department if you develop any unusual signs or symptoms within the next 24 hours, especially:

- hyperexcitability, convulsions, or seizures

No follow-up appointment is necessary unless you develop any of the symptoms listed above.

Call for an appointment with Dr. \_\_\_\_\_ in the practice of \_\_\_\_\_.

When you call for your appointment, please say that you were treated in the Emergency Department at \_\_\_\_\_ Hospital by \_\_\_\_\_ and were advised to be seen again in \_\_\_\_\_ days.

Return to the Emergency Department/\_\_\_\_\_ Clinic on (date) \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ AM/PM for a follow-up examination.

Do not perform vigorous physical activities for 1–2 days.

You may resume everyday activities including driving and operating machinery.

Do not return to work for \_\_\_\_ days.

You may return to work on a limited basis. See instructions below.

Avoid exposure to cigarette smoke for 72 hours; smoke may worsen the condition of your lungs.

Avoid drinking alcoholic beverages for at least 24 hours; alcohol may worsen injury to your stomach or have other effects.

Avoid taking the following medications: \_\_\_\_\_

You may continue taking the following medication(s) that your doctor(s) prescribed for you:

\_\_\_\_\_

Other instructions: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- Provide the Emergency Department with the name and the number of your primary care physician so that the ED can send him or her a record of your emergency department visit.

- You or your physician can get more information on the chemical by contacting: \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_, or by checking out the following Internet Web sites: \_\_\_\_\_; \_\_\_\_\_.

Signature of patient \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of physician \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_