

Hydrogen Peroxide Patient Information Sheet

This handout provides information and follow-up instructions for persons who have been exposed to hydrogen peroxide.

What is hydrogen peroxide?

Hydrogen peroxide is used widely in industry to bleach cloth and paper and to manufacture other chemicals. It is also an ingredient of some rocket fuels. Hydrogen peroxide is found in dilute form (3% to 10%) in the home and in concentrated form (30% or greater) in industry. In the home, 3% solutions of hydrogen peroxide are used as disinfectants for cuts and scrapes, and slightly more concentrated solutions (10%) are used in hair bleaches. Dilute solutions have almost no odor, but stronger solutions have a sharp odor. Hydrogen peroxide is not flammable, but concentrated solutions may cause combustion of organic materials.

What immediate health effects can result from hydrogen peroxide exposure?

Depending on the concentration, breathing hydrogen peroxide vapor can cause eye and throat irritation, coughing, and breathing difficulty. Serious eye or skin burns and bleaching of the hair may result from contact with hydrogen peroxide solutions. Drinking a concentrated hydrogen peroxide solution can cause vomiting and severe burns of the throat and stomach. Generally, the more serious the exposure, the more severe the symptoms.

Can hydrogen peroxide poisoning be treated?

There is no proven antidote for hydrogen peroxide poisoning, but its effects can be treated, and most persons get well. Persons who have experienced serious symptoms may need to be hospitalized.

Are any future health effects likely to occur?

A single small exposure from which a person recovers quickly is not likely to cause delayed or long-term effects. After a severe exposure, a person may not notice any symptoms for up to 24 hours, but may develop lung damage.

What tests can be done if a person has been exposed?

There are no specific blood and urine tests that can show whether a person has been exposed to hydrogen peroxide. However, blood tests and a chest x-ray may be used to evaluate lung injury. Testing is not needed in every case.

Where can more information about hydrogen peroxide be obtained?

More information about hydrogen peroxide 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:

- coughing, difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- wheezing, chest pain or tightness
- increased redness or pain or a pus-like discharge from injured skin, eyes, or other wound
- stomach pain or vomiting

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 to 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 _____