

Methyl Bromide Patient Information Sheet

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

What is methyl bromide?

Methyl bromide is a colorless gas or liquid that is odorless at low concentrations. At very high concentrations, it has a sweet, fruity odor. Tear gas is often mixed with it so that a person exposed to methyl bromide will be warned of its presence. Methyl bromide is used to kill insects in the soil and to rid soils and buildings of termites. Typically, the field or home is covered (“tented”) by a large tarp and the methyl bromide is pumped in. Methyl bromide is also used in industry to make other chemicals.

What immediate health effects can be caused by exposure to methyl bromide?

Breathing methyl bromide can cause injury to the brain, nerves, lungs, and throat. High doses can also injure the kidneys and liver. Contact with the skin and eyes can lead to irritation and burns. Generally, the more serious the exposure, the more severe the symptoms.

Can methyl bromide poisoning be treated?

There is no antidote for methyl bromide poisoning, but its effects can be treated and most persons recover. Persons who have experienced serious symptoms may need to be hospitalized and may need follow-up examinations or treatment later on.

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 serious exposure that causes lung or nervous system-related problems, permanent brain or nerve damage can result.

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

Specific tests for the presence of bromide in blood may provide some useful information to the doctor. If a severe exposure has occurred, blood and urine analyses and other tests may show whether the lungs, brain, nerves, liver, or kidneys have been damaged. Testing is not needed in every case.

Where can more information about methyl bromide be found?

More information about methyl bromide 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 or wheezing
- difficulty in breathing, shortness of breath, or chest pain
- difficulty in walking
- numbness of hands or feet
- confusion, dizziness, or fainting
- increased pain or a discharge from exposed eyes
- increased redness or pain or a pus-like discharge in the area of a skin burn

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 _____