

Chlordane Patient Information Sheet

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

What is chlordane?

Chlordane was produced as a thick, amber liquid or white powder. It was used as an insecticide in the form of a spray or powder on food crops and to rid homes and buildings of termites. It has been banned in the United States since 1988; however, many buildings and the soils around them have residue from previous chlordane use. Old bottles of chlordane may still be found in garages, warehouses, and landfills. Chlordane is not flammable, but may be dissolved in flammable solvents. On burning, or upon reaction with strong oxidizers or alkalis, chlordane decomposes to produce toxic fumes that include chlorine, phosgene (mustard gas), and hydrogen chloride.

What immediate health effects can be caused by exposure to chlordane?

Chlordane may cause effects when it is breathed or swallowed or when it touches the skin. Common effects of poisoning are nausea, irritability, headaches, stomach pain, and vomiting. Loss of coordination, tremors, convulsions, and death can occur with severe exposures. Generally, the higher the exposure, the more severe the symptoms. If lactating mothers are exposed, chlordane will contaminate the breast milk and may cause adverse effects in nursing infants.

Can chlordane poisoning be treated?

There is no antidote for chlordane, but its effects can be treated, and most exposed persons get well. Persons with 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. However, a single large exposure can result in the same neurological effects seen with chronic exposure. Exposure to chlordane over many years may cause blood disorders, and neurological effects, such as memory loss, irritability, numbness, loss of coordination, and seizures.

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

Specific tests for the presence of chlordane in blood or urine generally are not useful to the doctor. If a severe exposure has occurred, blood and urine analyses and other tests may show whether the blood, brain or kidneys have been injured. An electroencephalogram (EEG) may be used for evaluation if seizures have occurred. Testing is not needed in every case.

Where can more information about chlordane be found?

More information about chlordane 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:

- blurred vision
- coughing, difficulty breathing, or shortness of breath
- seizures or convulsions
- fever

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 _____