

Vinyl Acetate - ToxFAQs™

What is vinyl acetate?

Vinyl acetate is a man-made chemical. It is a colorless liquid with a sweet, fruity smell.

Vinyl acetate is used in industry to make glues, paints, plastics, sporting equipment (e.g., ski boots, bicycle seats), rubber foam, and building material. Vinyl acetate is also used as a modifier of food starch and in food packaging (e.g., ethylene-vinyl acetate copolymer).



What happens to vinyl acetate in the environment?

Vinyl acetate has been detected in low levels in the air and water in our communities. It has also been detected at low levels in the air and soil at hazardous waste sites. It gets into the environment mostly from industries that make or use it. It is mainly released into the air. Because it can dissolve in water, it may be in rain or snow. It can travel through the soil and enter groundwater.

Vinyl acetate breaks down quickly in the environment. In the air, sunlight breaks it down within a few hours or days. Similarly, vinyl acetate will break down in soil and water within a few hours or days. There is little known about levels of vinyl acetate in plants or animals, but levels are not expected to build up over time.

How can I be exposed to vinyl acetate?

You may be exposed to small amounts of vinyl acetate while using paints or glues that contain vinyl acetate, breathing contaminated air, or eating food items containing the compound. If you smoke cigarettes or live with a smoker, you may be exposed to vinyl acetate. If your water has vinyl acetate in it, household activities such as showering, bathing, or washing clothes or dishes may expose you to this chemical. Vinyl acetate found in soils can become a vapor and enter your home, usually through cracks and crevices in the wall or floor of a basement; this is known as vapor intrusion.

If you live near a hazardous waste site or work with vinyl acetate, you may be exposed to higher levels when compared to the general public due to increased exposure via vapor intrusion, contaminated air, and/or contaminated groundwater.

General population exposure to vinyl acetate is expected to be low. Individuals who smoke cigarettes, live near hazardous waste sites, or work with vinyl acetate may be exposed to higher levels in air.

How can vinyl acetate affect my health?

Vinyl acetate can cause nose and throat irritation if you breathe low-to-moderate levels.

Studies in animals showed that breathing vinyl acetate caused damage to their nose and lungs that worsened with longer exposure periods. When pregnant animals were exposed to vinyl chloride, there is some evidence of impaired growth and delayed development in pups.

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Can vinyl acetate cause cancer?

The ability of vinyl acetate to cause cancer in people has not been well studied.

Tumors in the nose were seen in rats that breathed vinyl acetate for a long-time. When rats and mice drank water containing vinyl acetate for a long time, cancer was seen in the mouth and stomach.

The [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services \(DHHS\)](#) has not evaluated the potential for vinyl acetate to cause cancer in people.

The [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency \(EPA\)](#) has not evaluated the potential for vinyl acetate to cause cancer in people.

The [International Agency for Research on Cancer \(IARC\)](#) has classified vinyl acetate as possibly carcinogenic to humans.

Can I get a medical test to check for vinyl acetate?

There is no test to show if you have been exposed specifically to vinyl acetate. It breaks down very quickly in the body to substances that are normally found in the body; thus, measurement of these break down products is not useful for determining whether you have been exposed to vinyl acetate. If you think you have been exposed to this or any other chemical, talk to your doctor or nurse or call poison control.

How can I protect myself and my family from vinyl acetate?

Most people don't need to take any special steps to avoid vinyl acetate in their daily lives. People may want to avoid smoking cigarettes or breathing in cigarette smoke. Wear latex or rubber gloves and work in a well-ventilated area when using glues or paints that may contain vinyl acetate. Keep products containing vinyl acetate out of the reach of children. Do not let your children play near hazardous waste sites.

For more information:

Call **CDC-INFO** at 1-800-232-4636, or submit your question online at <https://wwwn.cdc.gov/dcs/ContactUs/Form>

Go to ATSDR's Toxicological Profile for Vinyl Acetate: <https://wwwn.cdc.gov/TSP/ToxProfiles/ToxProfiles.aspx?id=671&tid=124>

Go to ATSDR's Toxic Substances Portal: <https://wwwn.cdc.gov/TSP/index.aspx>

Find & contact your ATSDR Regional Representative at <https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/regional-offices/index.html>

