



Salem/Cumberland County Health Department

CHLORINE

(PUBLIC HANDOUT)

What is chlorine?

Chlorine is:

- An element found in some household products & used in industry.
- Sometimes in the form of a poisonous gas. Chlorine can be changed into a liquid form which quickly turns into a gas and spreads quickly.
- Can be recognized by its odor, which is like bleach.
- A gas that appears to be yellow-green in color.
- Not flammable, but can react explosively when combined with chemicals like turpentine and ammonia.

What are the symptoms of chlorine exposure?

Chlorine is a choking agent. During or immediately after exposure to dangerous levels of chlorine, the following signs and symptoms may develop:

- Coughing
- Chest tightness
- Burning sensation in the nose, throat, and eyes
- Watery eyes
- Blurred vision
- Nausea and vomiting



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- Burning pain, redness, and blisters on the skin if exposed to gas.
- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath.
- Fluid in the lungs within 2-4 hours.

What are the long-term health effects of chlorine exposure?

Long-term problems from chlorine exposure are not found in people who survive a sudden exposure unless they suffer complications such as pneumonia during therapy. Chronic bronchitis may develop in people who develop pneumonia during therapy.

How can people be exposed to chlorine?

The risk of being exposed depends on how close they are to the place where the chlorine was released. Chlorine gas is heavier than air, so it will settle in low-lying areas.

If chlorine is released into the air:

People may be exposed through skin contact or eye contact. They may also be exposed by breathing air that contains chlorine.



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If chlorine liquid is released in water:

People may be exposed by touching or drinking water that contains chlorine.

If chlorine liquid comes in contact with food:

People may be exposed by eating the contaminated food.

How can people protect themselves against chlorine exposure?

Leave the area where the chlorine was released and get fresh air. Quickly moving to an area where fresh air is available is highly effective in reducing exposure to chlorine.

- If the chlorine release was outdoors, move away from the area where the chlorine was released. Go to the highest ground possible.
- If the chlorine release was indoors, get out of the building.

What should you do if you suspect you have been exposed to chlorine?

If you think you have been exposed, remove your clothing, rapidly wash your entire body with soap and water, and get medical attention. If you have swallowed chlorine, do not induce vomiting or drink fluids. Call 911 right away and explain what happened.



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How is chlorine exposure treated?

Treatment consists of removing the chlorine from the body as soon as possible. Supportive medical care in a hospital will be provided.

Where can people find out more information?

- Regional poison control center: 1-800-222-1222
- Center for Disease Control (CDC)
 - English – (888) 246-2675
 - Spanish – (888) 246-2857