



Salem/Cumberland County Health Department
TABUN
(PUBLIC HANDOUT)

What is Tabun?

Tabun is a man-made chemical warfare agent classified as a nerve agent. It was originally developed as a pesticide in Germany in 1936. Tabun is a clear, colorless, tasteless liquid with a faint fruity odor. Tabun can become a vapor if heated.

What are the symptoms of exposure to Tabun?

Although Tabun has a faint fruity odor, the odor may not be noticeable enough to give people enough warning about a toxic exposure. People exposed to a low or moderate dose of Tabun by inhalation, ingestion (swallowing), or skin absorption may experience some or all of the following symptoms within seconds to hours of exposure:

- Runny nose
- Watery eyes
- Small, pinpoint pupils
- Eye pain
- Blurred vision
- Drooling and excessive sweating
- Cough
- Chest tightness
- Rapid breathing



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- Diarrhea
- Increased urination
- Confusion
- Drowsiness
- Weakness
- Headache
- Nausea, vomiting, and/or abdominal pain
- Slow or fast heart rate
- Abnormally low or high blood pressure

Even a tiny drop of nerve agent on the skin can cause sweating and muscle twitching where the agent touched the skin. Exposure to a large dose of Tabun by any route may result in these additional health effects:

- Loss of consciousness
- Convulsions
- Paralysis
- Respiratory failure possibly leading to death

Showing these symptoms does not necessarily mean that a person has been exposed to Tabun.



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Where is Tabun found and how is it used?

Tabun is not found naturally in the environment. It is possible that Tabun or other nerve agents were agents were used in chemical warfare during the Iran-Iraq War in the 1980s.

How are people exposed to Tabun?

If it released into the air:

People can be exposed through skin contact, eye contact, or inhalation (breathing in the Tabun).

If it is released into the water:

Tabun mixes easily with water, so it could be used to poison water. Following release of Tabun into water, people can be exposed by drinking contaminated water or getting contaminated water on their skin.

If it is put in food:

People can be exposed by eating contaminated food.

Also note:

- ✓ A person's clothing can release Tabun for about 30 minutes after contact with Tabun vapor, which can lead to exposure of other people.



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- ✓ Tabun breaks down slowly in the body, meaning that repeated exposures to Tabun and/or other nerve agents can build up in the body.
- ✓ Because Tabun vapor is heavier than air, it will sink to low-lying areas and create a greater exposure hazard there.

What are the long-term health effects of exposure to

Tabun?

Those who are exposed to mild or moderate doses of Tabun usually recover completely. Those exposed to severe Doses of Tabun are not likely to survive. Unlike some pesticides, nerve agents have not been associated with neurological problems (of the nervous system) lasting more than 1-2 weeks after the exposure.

How can people protect themselves and what should they do if they are exposed to Tabun?

Recovery from Tabun exposure is possible with treatment, but the remedies available must be used quickly to be effective. Therefore, the best thing to do is avoid exposure.



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- Leave the area where the Tabun was released and get to fresh air. Quickly moving to an area where fresh air is available is highly effective in reducing the possibility of death from exposure to Tabun.
 - If the Tabun release was outdoors, move away from the area where the Tabun was released. Go to the highest ground possible, because Tabun is heavier than air and will sink to low-lying areas.
 - If the Tabun release was indoors, get out of the building.
- If you think you may have been exposed, remove your clothing, quickly wash your entire body with soap and water, and get medical care as quickly as possible.
- Removing and disposing of clothing:
 - Quickly take off clothing that has liquid Tabun on it. Any clothing that has to be pulled over the head should be cut off the body instead of pulled over the head. If possible, seal the clothing in a plastic bag.
 - Then seal the first plastic bag in a second plastic bag. Removing and sealing the clothing in this way will help protect you and other people from any chemicals that might be on your clothes.
 - If you placed your clothes in plastic bags, inform either the local or state health department or emergency



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personnel upon their arrival. Do not handle the plastic bags.

- If you are helping other people remove their clothing, try to avoid touching any contaminated areas, and remove the clothing as quickly as possible.
- Washing the body:
 - As quickly as possible, wash any liquid Tabun from your skin with large amounts of soap and water.
 - Washing with soap and water will help protect people from any chemicals on their bodies.
 - If your eyes are burning or your vision is blurred, rinse your eyes with plain water for 10 to 15 minutes. If you wear contacts, remove them and place them in the bags with the contaminated clothing. Do not put the contacts back in your eyes. If you wear eyeglasses, wash them with soap and water. You can put the eyeglasses back on after you wash them.
- If you have ingested (swallowed) Tabun, do not induce vomiting or drink fluids.
- **Seek medical attention right away. Dial 911 and explain what has happened.**

How is exposure to Tabun treated?

Treatment consists of removing Tabun from the body as soon as possible and providing supportive medical care in a



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hospital setting. Remedies are available for Tabun. They are most useful if given as soon as possible after exposure.

Where can people get more information about Tabun?

- Poison Control Center: 1-800-222-1222
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
 - English: 1-888-246-2675
 - Spanish: 1-888-246-2857