

First Aid for Poisoning

The Virginia Poison Center in Richmond, Virginia
804-828-9123 or 800-552-6337

ALWAYS CALL THE POISON CENTER IF YOU SUSPECT A POISONING.

The poison center's nurse will assess the situation, determine if there is any risk to the victim and recommend the correct care to give. They can also advise whether the victim will need to be seen by a physician --- MOST cases of accidental poisoning can be managed without referral to a health care facility.

Swallowed Poison...

Immediate first aid actions:

****allow the victim to rest**

****give *not more than 2 ounces of water.***

Do *not* give ipecac syrup or activated charcoal unless told to do so by the poison center.

Try to get information about what has been swallowed, including the **TIME it was taken, the **EXACT NAME** of the substance or medicine, and how **MUCH** has been swallowed. If a liquid chemical has been swallowed, have the victim rinse their mouth with water (and spit it out) several times.**

Call an ambulance *if* the victim is unconscious or having severe breathing difficulty. *Contact the poison center for further treatment advice.*

Inhaled Poison...

Victims should be moved into fresh air and allowed to rest. Breathing in fresh air is most important first aid.

The room (s) in which the gas/vapor occurred should be ventilated with open windows, fans, etc. Count the number of breaths per minute.

Remember that persons with respiratory diseases, especially asthma, may react to inhaled gas/vapor more severely than others.

It may trigger an asthmatic attack in these persons regardless of whether they have been "poisoned" by the chemical(s) involved. Treatment of an asthma attack caused by inhaled chemicals is the same as treatment of asthma caused by other things. *Contact the poison center for further treatment advice.*

Poison in the Eye...

Immediately rinse out the eye(s) with a gentle, steady stream of warm water for at least 15 minutes. This is very uncomfortable, and young children may not be able to cooperate. Help the victim to keep eyes **OPEN as the rinsing is done; if this too difficult then encourage them to blink constantly as the eye is rinsed. Avoid eye drops. Do not delay eye rinsing... it is the single most important action to prevent corneal injury! *Contact the poison center for further treatment advice.***

Poison on the Skin...

Remove any clothing that has become contaminated by the substance (s). Wear latex gloves when handling these victims to avoid getting any of the poison on your skin. If the poison is a dry substance, try to gently brush off as much as possible before rinsing. Rinse the skin with a steady stream of tepid water for 5 to 10 minutes. Then wash the skin with mild soap, and rinse with lots of tepid water for another 5 minutes. *Contact the poison center for further treatment advice.*

Bee or Wasp Stings...

A normal reaction to a bee or wasp sting will include: intense pain, a whitish bump with a red dot in its center, and swelling *at the site of the sting*.

Persons who have other symptoms may be having an allergic reaction. **ALLERGIC** reaction symptoms may include: rapid onset of breathing difficulty, vomiting, fainting, an itchy red rash distributed over the body, or any swelling **NOT** at the site of the sting. Call an ambulance immediately if you note these allergic reaction symptoms!

If there is a stinger remaining at the site it must be removed. The stinger will look like a small dark thorn. Do not pull it out with tweezers as this might squeeze the venom sac and put more venom into the victim's skin. Instead, gently scrape the stinger off the skin using the edge of a credit card, or the blunt edge of a table knife. Apply an ice cube to the sting site for 5 to 15 minutes. This will help to decrease the pain and swelling. Then apply a topical lotion or cream such as calamine or hydrocortisone. If the sting is on an arm or leg, raising it up high will also help to decrease swelling and pain. *Contact the poison center for additional treatment advice.*