

Pesticides

Pesticides - First Aid

On this page

[How do I know if I have been exposed to pesticides?](#)

[What are first aid measures for pesticides?](#)

How do I know if I have been exposed to pesticides?

Pesticides most commonly affect the systems in the body that control nerves and muscles (the central nervous system, or CNS). General symptoms of short-term exposures (poisonings) are listed below.

General Symptoms that Might Indicate Pesticide Poisoning

Mild Poisoning	Moderate Poisoning	Severe Poisoning
<p>Any of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • irritation of the nose, throat, eyes or skin • headache • dizziness • loss of appetite • thirst • nausea • diarrhea • sweating • weakness or fatigue • restlessness • nervousness • changes in mood • insomnia 	<p>Any of the mild symptoms, plus any of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • vomiting • excessive salivation • coughing • feeling of constriction in throat and chest • abdominal cramps • blurring of vision • rapid pulse • excessive perspiration • profound weakness • trembling • muscular incoordination • mental confusion 	<p>Any of the mild or moderate symptoms, plus any of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • inability to breathe • extra phlegm or mucous in the airways • small or pinpoint pupils • chemical burns on the skin • increased rate of breathing • loss of reflexes • uncontrollable muscular twitching • unconsciousness • death

NOTE: The term "pesticide" describes a very large and diverse group of chemicals or products. It is very important to always get specific information about the exact product you are using.

The Health Canada website has a pesticide product information database, which includes [labels](#).

For more information, other OSH Answers documents in this series include:

- [Pesticides - General](#)
- [Pesticides - Health Effects](#)
- [Pesticides - Labels](#)
- [Pesticides - Re-Entry Time](#)
- [Pesticides - Working Safely](#)

What are first aid measures for pesticides?

Immediate treatment can make a difference in a person's recovery. Knowing the signs and symptoms of pesticide exposure is very important. It is important that workers learn to recognize these symptoms -- so they can recognize a potential overexposure in themselves or in a co-worker.

Proper planning and training is very important. First aid training should include specific information about the pesticides used at your workplace.

Some of the symptoms listed above may not be easy to distinguish from other illnesses. If in doubt, call your doctor, hospital, or local poison control centre.

In general:

Consult the Safety Data Sheet or technical information sheet for the pesticide that you intend to use **BEFORE** using the product. Some pesticides have antidotes. If you are using a pesticide that has an antidote, make sure that your local hospital or healthcare facility keeps a supply of the antidote and is knowledgeable in its use. You can get additional advice from the manufacturer, supplier or a doctor familiar with the pesticide and your workplace, if necessary.

- Provide training in first aid.
- Know where and how to obtain medical assistance. Call 911 or the Poison Control Centre for your region. Be prepared by having the label, if possible, so you can provide the pesticide name, active ingredient and registration number.
- When medical advice cannot be reached, check and follow the pesticide label for directions. Transport the victim to a medical clinic or hospital.
- Have first aid equipment available such as eye wash and shower (or use a hose or tap if needed), first aid kit, soap and water.
- Protect yourself by wearing appropriate protective clothing and equipment when providing first aid, as necessary. For example, wear chemical protective gloves when administering first aid to the victim of a pesticide that can be absorbed through the skin.
- Watch for health effects in yourself and co-workers – if you suspect a poisoning, **get first aid and medical help as soon as possible**. Stay with the victim so you can monitor their condition. Keep the victim at rest, warm and comfortable.
- Remove the person from the source of exposure. Wear a respirator if it is hazardous to enter the area to perform the rescue or wait for emergency responders to arrive.
- If a victim is not breathing, start artificial respiration. Many pesticides can be absorbed through the skin, including the lips and mouth – **REMEMBER** to protect yourself.

- If a worker gets splashed in the eyes, immediately flush the eyes gently with clean running water for at least 15-20 minutes and get medical help. If a contact lens is present, DO NOT delay flushing or attempt to remove the lens. Flush longer if the label directions indicate to do so.
- If a worker gets splashed on the skin, remove the contaminated clothing and flush with water for 15-20 minutes or wash the skin and hair with non-abrasive soap and water for 15-20 minutes. Clean under the finger or toenails
- Do not re-use the contaminated clothing until it has been laundered. Warn laundry personnel of the product hazards. Discard contaminated clothing and leather goods if recommended by the manufacturer or supplier. If the pesticide is a corrosive liquid, longer flushing may be necessary (30 minutes or longer). Follow the advice on your Safety Data Sheet.
- If the pesticide was swallowed, do not induce vomiting unless specifically told to do so by medical personnel. If the worker is retching or vomiting, place them in the recovery position. This position reduced the chance of vomit from entering the lungs and causing more damage. Do not let them lie on their back.
- Perform any other first aid measures that may be needed.
- Once decontamination is complete, transport the victim to the nearest hospital or emergency medical centre if symptoms persist or if you are advised to do so by a doctor or poison control centre.
- Take along the pesticide container or label.

Adapted from: [Using pesticides safely](#). Worksafe Alberta (pdf) and [Emergency Washing Equipment](#). Safe Work Manitoba

Fact sheet last revised: 2023-03-23

Disclaimer

Although every effort is made to ensure the accuracy, currency and completeness of the information, CCOHS does not guarantee, warrant, represent or undertake that the information provided is correct, accurate or current. CCOHS is not liable for any loss, claim, or demand arising directly or indirectly from any use or reliance upon the information.