
Information and recommendations for patients

- **Patients exposed only to ammonia gas do not pose a significant risk of secondary contamination. Patients whose clothing or skin is contaminated with ammonia-containing liquids can secondarily contaminate rescue and medical personnel by direct contact or through off-gassing ammonia.**
 - **Ammonia gas or solution is highly irritating and can cause serious corrosive burns to eyes or skin.**
 - **Irritation of the respiratory tract can result in rhinorrhea, coughing, and dyspnea. Swelling of the throat and signs of accumulation of fluid in the lungs (shortness of breath, cyanosis, expectoration, cough) may occur.**
 - **There is no antidote to be administered to counteract the effects of ammonia. Treatment consists of supportive measures.**
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Substance information

Ammonia (NH₃), CAS 7664-41-7

Synonyms include ammonia gas, anhydrous ammonia and liquid ammonia. Ammonia dissolves readily in water to form a caustic alkaline solution of ammonium hydroxide.

Ammonia is lighter than air. In case of an accidental release of liquid ammonia under pressure, rapid cooling down causes formation of a dense cloud that hugs the ground.

Ammonia is widely used as a catalyst and reagent in the manufacture of fertilizers, plastics, explosives, pesticides, other chemicals, and as a refrigerant. It is found in many household and industrial-strength cleaning solutions.

What immediate health effects can result from exposure to ammonia?

Most exposures to ammonia occur from breathing the gas. People usually notice the pungent odor of even small amounts and experience burning of the eyes, nose, and throat. Tearing, coughing and choking may occur. Exposure to high levels can cause death from a swollen throat or from chemical damage to the lungs. Eye exposure to concentrated gas or liquid can cause serious corneal burns and may lead to ulceration or perforation with ensuing blindness. Skin contact with ammonia-containing liquid may cause burns.

Are any future health effects likely to occur?

A single small exposure from which a person recovers quickly is not likely to cause delayed or long-term effects. Some persons who have had serious exposures have developed permanent breathing difficulty and tend to develop lung infections easily.

Follow-up instructions

Keep this page and take it with you to your next appointment. Follow only the instructions checked below.

- () Call your doctor or the Emergency Department if you develop any unusual signs or symptoms within the next 24 hours, especially:
 - coughing or wheezing
 - difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
 - increased pain or a discharge from exposed skin or eyes
 - chest pain or tightness
 - stomach pain or vomiting
- () No follow-up appointment is necessary unless you develop any of the symptoms listed above.
- () Call for an appointment with Dr. _____ in the practice of _____
When you call for your appointment, please say that you were treated in the Emergency Department at _____ Hospital by _____
and were advised to be seen again in _____ days.
- () Return to the Emergency Department/ _____ Clinic on (date) _____ at _____ am/pm for a follow-up examination.
- () Do not perform vigorous physical activities for 1 to 2 days.
- () You may resume everyday activities including driving and operating machinery.
- () Do not return to work for _____ days.
- () You may return to work on a limited basis. See instructions below.
- () Avoid exposure to cigarette smoke for 72 hours; smoke may worsen the condition of your lungs.
- () Avoid drinking alcoholic beverages; alcohol may worsen your clinical conditions.
- () Avoid taking the following medications: _____

- () You may continue taking the following medication(s) that your doctor(s) prescribed for you: _____

- () Other instructions: _____

Signature of patient _____ Date _____
Signature of physician _____ Date _____

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