
Information and recommendations for patients

- Patients exposed only to cyanide vapor do not pose a significant risk of secondary contamination. Patients whose clothing is contaminated with cyanide-containing liquids may secondarily contaminate rescue and medical personnel by direct contact or through evaporation of cyanides.
 - Cyanide poisoning may lead to death within minutes. Given reason to believe that cyanide-containing material is present, severe hypoxic signs in the absence of cyanosis suggest the diagnosis.
 - In case of suspected cyanide poisoning immediate administration of 100% oxygen is crucial. If the patient is symptomatic use the recommended cyanide antidotes.
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Substance information

Cyanides are the salts of hydrocyanic acid (e.g. cyanogen potassium and similar). Their physical and chemical properties are dependent on the nature of the chemical in question.

Alkaline cyanide salts are used for gold and silver ore extraction, metal heat treating, electroplating as well as for the production of dyes, pigments, and as fumigants and insecticides.

Cyanide can also be released from various nitrile compounds that are used in the production of plastics or occur naturally in plants.

What immediate health effects can result from exposure to cyanide?

Small amounts of cyanides may cause headache, dizziness, weakness, nausea, and vomiting. Larger amounts can cause gasping, irregular heartbeats, seizures, fainting, and even death. Generally, the more serious the exposure, the more severe the symptoms.

In case of suspected cyanide poisoning breathing of pure oxygen is the first therapy. Persons with serious symptoms will need antidote therapy and subsequently will be hospitalized.

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 heart or brain damage.

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:
 - difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
 - confusion or fainting
 - chest pain
- () 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 _____

References

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