



[Home](#) → [Medical Encyclopedia](#) → Caulking compound poisoning

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## Caulking compound poisoning

Caulking compounds are substances used to seal cracks and holes around windows and other openings. Caulking compound poisoning occurs when someone swallows these substances.

This article is for information only. DO NOT use it to treat or manage an actual poison exposure. If you or someone you are with has an exposure, call your local emergency number (such as 911), or your local poison control center can be reached directly by calling the national toll-free Poison Help hotline (1-800-222-1222) from anywhere in the United States.

### Poisonous Ingredient

The harmful substances in caulk are these hydrocarbons:

- Acrylic
- Acrylic-latex
- Neoprene
- Polysulfides
- Polyurethanes
- Silicone
- Vulcanized butyl rubber

### Where Found

Various caulking compounds contain these substances. Some caulking compounds may contain other substances.

### Symptoms

Below are symptoms of caulking compound poisoning in different parts of the body.

#### EYES, EARS, NOSE, AND THROAT

- Loss of vision
- Pain in the throat
- Pain or burning in the nose, eyes, ears, lips, or tongue

## STOMACH AND INTESTINES

- Abdominal pain
- Blood in the stool
- Burns of the food pipe (esophagus)
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Vomiting blood

## HEART AND BLOOD

- Collapse
- Low blood pressure that develops rapidly (shock)

## LUNGS AND AIRWAYS

- Breathing difficulty (from breathing in the substance)
- Throat swelling (may also cause breathing difficulty)

## NERVOUS SYSTEM

- Concentration problems
- Headache
- Lightheadedness

## SKIN

- Burn
- Irritation

## Home Care

Get medical help right away. Do not make the person throw up unless poison control or a health care provider tells you to. If the chemical is on the skin or in the eyes, flush with lots of water for at least 15 minutes.

If the person swallowed the caulk, give them water or milk right away if poison control or a provider tells you to do so. Do not give anything to drink if the person has symptoms that make it hard to swallow. These include vomiting, seizures, or a decreased level of alertness.

If the person breathed in caulk fumes, move them to fresh air right away.

## Before Calling Emergency

Have this information ready:

- Person's age, weight, and condition
- Name of the product (and ingredients, if known)

- Time it was swallowed
- Amount swallowed

## Poison Control

Your local poison control center can be reached directly by calling the national toll-free Poison Help hotline (1-800-222-1222) from anywhere in the United States. This national hotline will let you talk to experts in poisoning. They will give you further instructions.

This is a free and confidential service. All local poison control centers in the United States use this national number. You should call if you have any questions about poisoning or poison prevention. It does NOT need to be an emergency. You can call for any reason, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

## What to Expect at the Emergency Room

Take the container to the hospital with you, if possible.

The provider will measure and monitor the person's vital signs, including temperature, pulse, breathing rate, and blood pressure.

Tests that may be done include:

- Bronchoscopy -- camera down the throat to look for burns in the airways and lungs
- Chest x-ray
- Electrocardiogram (ECG)
- Endoscopy -- camera down the throat to look at (and possibly remove) caulk from the esophagus and the stomach

Treatment may include:

- Fluids through the vein (IV)
- Medicine to treat symptoms
- Washing of the skin (irrigation), perhaps every few hours for several days
- Breathing support, including tube through the mouth into the lungs, and breathing machine (ventilator)

## Outlook (Prognosis)

How well someone does depends on the amount of fumes they breathed in, or how much caulk was swallowed, and how quickly treatment is received. The faster medical help is given, the better the chance for recovery. Damage can continue to occur for several weeks after swallowing caulk.

Swallowing such poisons can have severe effects on many parts of the body. Burns in the airway or gastrointestinal tract can lead to tissue necrosis, resulting in infection, shock, and death, even several months after the substance was first swallowed. Scars may form in these tissues leading to long-term difficulties with breathing, swallowing, and digestion.

# References

Wang GS, Buchanan JA. Hydrocarbons. In: Walls RM, ed. *Rosen's Emergency Medicine: Concepts and Clinical Practice*. 10th ed. Philadelphia, PA: Elsevier; 2023:chap 147.

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