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Diesel oil

Diesel oil is a heavy oil used in diesel engines. Diesel oil poisoning occurs when someone swallows diesel oil.

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

Various hydrocarbons

Where Found

Diesel oil

Symptoms

Diesel oil poisoning can cause symptoms in many parts of the body.

EYES, EARS, NOSE, AND THROAT

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

GASTROINTESTINAL SYSTEM

- Blood in the stool
- Burns of the throat (esophagus)
- Severe abdominal pain
- Vomiting
- Vomiting blood

HEART AND BLOOD VESSELS

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

LUNGS AND AIRWAYS

- Breathing difficulty
- Empyema (infected fluid surrounding the lungs)
- Hemorrhagic pulmonary edema (bloody fluid in the lungs)
- Lung irritation and cough
- Respiratory distress or failure
- Pneumothorax (lung collapse, partial or complete)
- Pleural effusion (fluid surrounding the lungs, reducing their ability to expand)
- Secondary bacterial or viral infection
- Throat swelling (may also cause breathing difficulty)

Many of the most dangerous effects of hydrocarbon (such as diesel oil) poisoning are due to inhaling the fumes.

NERVOUS SYSTEM

- Agitation
- Blurred vision
- Brain damage from low oxygen levels (may lead to memory issues and decreased ability to think clearly)
- Coma (decreased level of consciousness and lack of responsiveness)
- Confusion
- Decreased coordination
- Dizziness
- Headache
- Seizures
- Somnolence (sleepiness and decreased responsiveness)
- Weakness

SKIN

- Burns
- Irritation

Home Care

Seek medical help right away. Do not make a person throw up unless told to do so by poison control or a health care professional.

If the chemical was swallowed, immediately give the person water or milk, unless instructed otherwise by a health care provider. Do not give water or milk if the person is having symptoms (such as vomiting, convulsions, or a decreased level of alertness) that make it hard to swallow.

If the chemical is on the skin or in the eyes, flush with lots of water for at least 15 minutes.

Before Calling Emergency

Get the following information:

- The person's age, weight, and condition
- Name of the product (ingredients and strengths, 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

The provider will measure and monitor the person's vital signs, including temperature, pulse, breathing rate, and blood pressure. Symptoms will be treated as appropriate. The person may receive:

- Blood and urine tests
- Breathing support, including oxygen given through a tube through the mouth into the lungs, and breathing machine (ventilator)
- Bronchoscopy -- camera down the throat to see burns in the airways and lungs
- Chest x-ray
- ECG (heart tracing)
- Endoscopy -- camera down the throat to see burns in the esophagus (swallowing tube) and the stomach
- Fluids through the vein (by IV)
- Medicine to treat symptoms
- Surgical removal of burned skin (skin debridement)
- Tube through the mouth into the stomach to aspirate (suck out) the stomach, but only in cases of massive ingestion if the victim is seen within an hour of swallowing the poison and if there is no injury to the esophagus
- Washing of the skin (irrigation), perhaps every few hours for several days

Outlook (Prognosis)

How well the person does depends on the amount of poison swallowed and how quickly treatment is received. The faster the person gets medical help, the better the chance for recovery.

Swallowing diesel fuel can damage the linings of the:

- Esophagus
- Intestines
- Mouth
- Stomach
- Throat

Serious and permanent damage can occur if the diesel gets into the lungs.

Delayed injury may occur, including a hole forming in the throat, esophagus, stomach or lungs. This can lead to severe bleeding and infection, and may be fatal. Surgery may be needed to treat these complications.

The harsh taste of diesel fuel makes it unlikely that a large amount will be swallowed. However, cases of poisoning have occurred in people trying to suck (siphon) gas from an automobile tank using their mouth and a garden hose (or similar tube). This practice is very dangerous and is not advised.

Alternative Names

Oil

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