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## Carbolic acid poisoning

Carbolic acid is a sweet-smelling clear liquid. It is added to many different products. Carbolic acid poisoning occurs when someone touches or swallows this chemical.

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

Phenol is the harmful substance in carbolic acid.

### Where Found

Carbolic acid can be found in:

- Adhesive dyes
- Lubricating oils
- Perfumes
- Textiles
- Various antiseptics
- Various disinfectants
- Various germicides

Other products may also contain carbolic acid.

### Symptoms

Below are symptoms of carbolic acid poisoning in different parts of the body.

#### BLADDER AND KIDNEYS

- Blue- or green-colored urine
- Decreased urine output

- No urine output

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

- Severe burns in the mouth and food pipe (esophagus)
- Yellow eyes (jaundice)

## STOMACH AND INTESTINES

- Abdominal (stomach) pain - severe
- Bloody stools
- Diarrhea
- Nausea and vomiting - possibly bloody

## HEART AND BLOOD

- Low blood pressure (shock)
- Rapid heart rate

## LUNGS AND AIRWAYS

- Deep, rapid breathing
- Wheezing
- Trouble breathing (may be life threatening if inhaled)

## NERVOUS SYSTEM

- Coma (decreased level of consciousness and lack of responsiveness)
- Seizures (convulsions)
- Hyperactivity
- Lack of alertness (stupor)

## SKIN

- Blue lips and fingernails (cyanosis)
- Burns
- Yellow skin (jaundice)

## WHOLE BODY

- Excessive thirst
- Heavy sweating

## **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 person swallowed the carbolic acid, give them water or milk right away, if poison control or a provider tells you to.

Do not give anything to drink if the person has symptoms that make it hard to swallow. These include vomiting, convulsions, or a decreased level of alertness.

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

## **Before Calling Emergency**

Have this information ready:

- Person's age, weight, and condition
- Name of product (and ingredients and strength, 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:

- Blood and urine tests
- 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 for burns in the esophagus and the stomach

Treatment may include:

- Fluids through a vein (by IV)
- Laxative
- Medicines to relieve pain
- Skin creams to treat burns
- Breathing support, including tube through the mouth into the lungs and connected to a breathing machine (ventilator)

## Outlook (Prognosis)

How well someone does depends on how much carbolic acid was swallowed and how quickly treatment is received. The faster medical help is given, the better the chance for recovery.

Damage continues to occur to the esophagus and stomach for several weeks after the poison was swallowed. Death may occur as long as a month later.

## Alternative Names

Phenol poisoning; Phenyllic acid poisoning; Hydroxybenzene poisoning; Phenic acid poisoning; Benzenol poisoning

## References

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