

Household Chemicals



Chemicals are found everywhere. They are used to purify drinking water, increase crop production and make household chores much easier. But if used or released improperly, they can become a hazard. Nearly every household uses products containing hazardous materials or chemicals. Proper storage and handling of these products and understanding how to react during an emergency can reduce the risk of injury.

Know Your Risk and What to Do

- Make an inventory of hazardous materials in your home.
- Once you have located a product, check the label and take the necessary steps to ensure that you are using, storing, and disposing of the material according to the manufacturer's directions.
- Store household chemicals in places where children cannot see them or gain access to them.
- Post the number of the emergency medical services and the poison control center by all telephones. In an emergency situation, you may not have time to look up critical phone numbers. The national poison control number is (800) 222-1222.

Children and Poisoning

- The most common hazardous materials emergencies in the home involve small children eating medicines.
- Keep all medicines, cosmetics, cleaning products, and other chemicals out of sight and out of reach of children.
- If your child should eat or drink a non-food substance, find the container(s) and take it to the phone.
- Call the Poison Control Center or 9-1-1 and follow their instructions carefully.
- The first aid advice found on containers may not be appropriate; do not give anything by mouth until you have been advised by professionals.

Before a Household Chemical Emergency

The following are guidelines for buying, storing, and using hazardous household chemicals safely:

- Buy only as much as you think you will use.
- Keep products containing hazardous materials in their original containers and never remove the labels unless the container is corroding. Contents of corroding containers should be repackaged and clearly labeled.
- Never store hazardous products in food containers.
- Never mix household any hazardous chemicals or waste with other products. Incompatibles, such as chlorine bleach and ammonia, may react, ignite, or explode
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions for the proper use of the household chemical.
- Never smoke while using household chemicals.

- Never use hair spray, cleaning solutions, paint products, or pesticides near an open flame. (E.g., pilot light, lighted candle, fireplace, wood burning stove, etc.) Although you may not be able to see or smell them, vapor particles in the air could catch fire or explode.

Learn to recognize the symptoms of toxic poisoning, which are as follows:

- Difficulty breathing.
- Irritation of the eyes, skin, throat, or respiratory tract.
- Changes in skin color.
- Headache or blurred vision.
- Dizziness.
- Clumsiness or lack of coordination.
- Cramps or diarrhea.

Be prepared to seek medical assistance:

- Post the number of the emergency medical services and the poison control center by all telephones. In an emergency situation, you may not have time to look up critical phone numbers.
- The national poison control number is (800) 222-1222.

During a Household Chemical Emergency:

If there is a danger of fire or explosion:

- Get out of the residence immediately. Do not waste time collecting items or calling the 9-1-1 when you are in danger. Call the 9-1-1 from outside once you are safely away from danger.
- Stay upwind and away from the residence to avoid breathing toxic fumes.

If someone has been exposed to a household chemical:

- Find any containers of the substance that are readily available in order to provide requested information. Call poison control or 9-1-1.
- Follow the emergency operator or dispatcher's first aid instructions carefully.
- The first aid advice found on containers may not be appropriate; do not give anything by mouth until you have been advised by professionals.
- Discard clothing that may have been contaminated. Some chemicals may not wash out completely.