Chemical Emergencies

You may be exposed to a chemical in three ways:
1. Breathing the chemical
2. Swallowing contaminated food, water, or medication
3. Touching the chemical, or coming into contact with clothing or things that have touched the chemical

Remember, you may be exposed to chemicals even though you may not be able to see or smell anything unusual.

Responding During a Chemical Emergency

Many organizations help the community in an emergency, such as police, fire, and sheriff’s departments; the American Red Cross; and government agencies. All of these groups coordinate their activities through the local office of emergency management. In many areas, local hazardous materials (hazmat) teams are trained to respond to chemical accidents.

Preventing Chemical Accidents

Chemicals are found everywhere—in our kitchens, medicine cabinets, basements, and garages. Most chemical accidents occur in our own homes. And they can be prevented.

If an accident involving hazardous materials occurs, you will be notified by the authorities as to what steps...
to take. You may hear a siren or be
called by telephone; or emergency
personnel may drive by and give
instructions over a loudspeaker.
Officials could even come to your
door. If you hear a warning signal,
you should go indoors and listen to a
local Emergency Alert System (EAS)
station for emergency instructions
from county or state officials.

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Points to Remember
In the event of an emergency, follow
the instructions of the authorities
carefully. They know best how
to protect you and your family.
Listen to your emergency broadcast
stations on radio and TV.

If you are told to shelter in place,
go inside and seal all windows and
doors. Close all vents and turn off all
fans and heating or cooling systems.
Take family members and pets to a
safe room and listen to emergency
broadcast stations for instructions.

If you are told to evacuate
immediately, follow your family
emergency plan. Take your family
emergency supplies kit. Pack
only the bare essentials, such as
medications, and leave your home
quickly. Follow the traffic route
authorities recommend. Don’t take
shortcuts on the way to the shelter.

If you find someone who appears
to have been injured from chemical
exposure, make sure you are not in
danger before administering first aid.
Remember, the best way to
protect yourself and your family
is to be prepared.

Accidental Poisoning
The most common home chemical
emergencies involve small
children eating medicines. Keep
all medicines, cosmetics, cleaning
products, and other household
chemicals out of sight and out of
reach of children. Experts in the
field of chemical manufacturing
suggest that doing so could
eliminate up to 75 percent of all
poisoning of small children.

If someone in your home eats
or drinks a nonfood substance,
immediately find the container it
came out of and take it with you to
the phone. Call the Poison Control
Center (1-800-222-1222), Emergency
Medical Services (EMS), 9-1-1, or the
operator and tell them exactly what
your child ingested.

Follow their instructions carefully.
The first aid advice found on the
container may not be appropriate.
Do not give anything by mouth
until you have been advised by
medical professionals.

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