



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT CHEMICAL EMERGENCIES

What is a chemical emergency?

Chemical emergencies happen when the air is poisoned with harmful chemicals, or when chemicals are used to contaminate (poison) food or put in drinking water. These chemicals can be breathed in, absorbed through the skin, or ingested by eating or drinking food or water.

What should I do *during* a chemical emergency?

Listen to the television, radio, or emergency-alert system for instructions. Have a battery-powered radio available, if needed. Officials will tell you whether to stay inside or leave your home. They will tell you where to go if you need to leave your home. If you are told to stay in your home, you might also be instructed to:

- Turn off all ventilation systems. This includes furnaces, air conditioners, vents, and fans.
- Stay in an inside room with no windows. Make sure there is enough space for everyone in the room.
- Seal the room openings with heavy-duty tape and plastic sheets. Room openings include doors and all vents.

If you are caught in an unprotected area, you should:

- Try to get away from the poisoned area as quickly as possible.
- Try to find shelter as soon as possible.

Will a chemical emergency make me sick?

During a chemical emergency, you may have some of these symptoms:

- Watery eyes
- Choking
- Trouble walking in a straight line
- Confusion
- Burning feeling on your skin
- Twitching
- Trouble breathing

In case of a chemical emergency, local or state officials will let you know what symptoms to look for. If you feel sick, call your doctor right away. They may tell you to:

- Take off your clothes and put them in a plastic bag. Put on clean clothes.
- Gently and thoroughly wash yourself with soap and water. Do NOT scrub your skin because the chemicals could cause more burning.

What should I do *after* a chemical emergency?

Continue to listen to the television, radio, or emergency-alert system for instructions. If you think you have been exposed to a chemical poison, call your local health department or your local police department.

Ready in 3 is an emergency-preparedness program for Missouri. The Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services sponsors the program. **Ready in 3** aims to help residents and communities prepare for many types of emergencies from tornadoes to terrorism. For more information, visit health.mo.gov/emergencies/readyin3.