

ABRIN FACT SHEET

What is abrin?

Abrin is a natural poison that is found in the seeds of a plant called rosary pea. Abrin can be made in the form of a powder, a mist and a pellet, or it can be dissolved in water. Abrin is a stable substance that can last for a long time in the environment regardless of extreme hot or cold temperature conditions. Avoid exposure to abrin because there is no antidote that exists.

How can you be exposed to abrin?

It will take a deliberate act to obtain abrin from rosary pea seeds and use it to poison people. Breathing in abrin (mist or powder) can expose you. You could be exposed if you touch any surfaces where the particles or droplets have landed or if the droplets have landed on your skin or in your eyes. You could ingest abrin if it is in the food or water. Abrin poisoning is **not** contagious. It cannot be spread from one person to another through casual contact.

What are the immediate symptoms of exposure to abrin?

If you inhale abrin, within a few hours you may have the following symptoms: difficulty breathing, fever, cough, nausea, heavy sweating, tightness in the chest and fluid building up in the lungs. If you ingest a large amount of abrin, you will develop vomiting and diarrhea that may become bloody. Next, severe dehydration followed by low blood pressure. Other symptoms may include hallucinations, seizures and blood in the urine. If you have skin and eye exposure, the mist or powder abrin can cause redness and pain of the skin and the eyes. Death from abrin poisoning can take place within 36 to 72 hours of exposure, depending on the route of exposure and the dose received.

What are the long-term health effects of exposure to abrin?

If death has not occurred in 3 to 5 days, the victim will usually recover. Abrin poisoning is not contagious. It cannot be spread from person to person through casual contact.

What should I do if I think I have been exposed to abrin?

If you think you have been exposed to abrin, move quickly to an area where fresh air is available. Remove your clothing and quickly wash your entire body with soap and water. If your eyes are burning or your vision is blurred, rinse them with plain water for 10 to 15 minutes. If you wear contact lenses, remove them before rinsing your eyes. Place your contaminated clothes and contact lenses into a plastic bag and seal. Place the bag into a second plastic bag and seal. **Call 911 for medical attention right away and removal of the contaminated items. Do not drive yourself to the hospital as you may become very ill on your way.**

Where can I get more information on abrin?

www.bt.cdc.gov

www.dshs.state.tx.us

www.state.nj.us/health/eoh/rtkweb/rtkhsfs.htm

Source of Information

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)