

## **SARIN FACT SHEET**

### **What is sarin?**

Sarin is a man-made chemical warfare agent, also known as a nerve agent. It is a clear, colorless and tasteless liquid that has no odor in its pure form. However, sarin can evaporate into a vapor and spread into the environment.

### **How you can be exposed to sarin?**

It is hard to detect sarin, since it is odorless. You can be exposed by touching, drinking or by eating food that has been contaminated with sarin. If released into the air, you can be exposed through skin and eye contact or by inhalation.

A person's clothing can release sarin for about 30 minutes after it has come in contact with sarin vapor, which can lead to exposure of other people. The extent of the sarin poisoning will depend on the amount, the length of time exposed, and how the person is exposed.

### **How does sarin work?**

This nerve agent can cause its toxic effects by preventing the proper operation of the chemical acts as the body "off switch" for glands and muscles. Without an "off switch," the glands and muscles are constantly being stimulated. The glands and muscles may tire and no longer be able to sustain breathing function.

### **What are the immediate symptoms?**

The type of symptoms will depend on the route, amount and length of time of exposure to sarin.

If exposed to a vapor, the symptoms will appear within a few seconds. If exposed to the liquid form, the symptoms will appear within a few minutes up to 18 hours.

If you are exposed to low or moderate doses of sarin, you may have the symptoms:

- runny nose
- blurred vision or eye pain
- sweating
- coughing
- chest tightness or fast breathing
- diarrhea, nausea or vomiting
- increased urination,
- confusion,
- drowsiness
- headache

- slow or fast heart rate
- low or high blood pressure.

**What are the long-term health effects?**

Mild or moderately exposed people usually recover completely. If exposed for a long period of time to sarin, you may have loss of consciousness, seizures, paralysis and breathing problems possibly leading to death.

**What should you do if you think you have been exposed to sarin?**

*Recovery from sarin exposure is possible with treatment, but the antidotes must be used quickly to be effective.*

If you think you have been exposed, move quickly to an area where fresh air is available. Remove your clothing by cutting them off the body; if possible do not pull the clothes over your head. Quickly wash your entire body with large amounts of 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 contacts, wash your hands after removing contaminated clothes and then remove the contacts before rinsing your eyes.

If you wear eye glasses, remove and wash them with soap and water. You can put your eyeglasses back on after you wash them. Place your contaminated clothes and contact lenses into a plastic bag and seal. Place the bag into a second plastic bag and seal. If sarin has been ingested, do not drink fluids or induce vomiting. **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 you can get more information on sarin?**

[www.bt.cdc.gov](http://www.bt.cdc.gov)

[www.dshs.state.tx.us](http://www.dshs.state.tx.us)

[www.state.nj.us/health/eoh/rtkweb/rtkhsfs.htm](http://www.state.nj.us/health/eoh/rtkweb/rtkhsfs.htm)

**Source of information:**

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

Rev. July 2008