
Crotonaldehyde Patient Information Sheet

This handout provides information and follow-up instructions for persons who have been exposed to crotonaldehyde.

What is crotonaldehyde?

Crotonaldehyde is a colorless to pale-yellow liquid with a strong, pungent odor. It is used most extensively in the manufacture of sorbic acid, but has also been used as a warning agent in fuel gases, in the preparation of rubber accelerators, in leather tanning, as an alcohol denaturant, and as a stabilizer for tetraethyl-lead.

What immediate health effects can be caused by exposure to crotonaldehyde?

Low levels of crotonaldehyde in the air can irritate the eyes, nose, throat, and lungs and cause cough, chest tightness, and shortness of breath. Higher levels can cause a build-up of fluid in the lungs, which may cause death. If liquid crotonaldehyde comes in contact with the skin or eyes, it can cause severe burns. Generally, the more serious the exposure, the more severe the symptoms.

Can crotonaldehyde poisoning be treated?

There is no antidote for crotonaldehyde, but its effects can be treated and most exposed persons get well. Seriously exposed persons may need to be hospitalized.

Are any future health effects likely to occur?

In rare cases, after exposure to crotonaldehyde, certain persons can become sensitized so that even small exposures to crotonaldehyde or other irritants can trigger skin irritation. Therefore, it is important to tell your doctor that you have been exposed to crotonaldehyde. The Department of Health and Human Services has determined that crotonaldehyde may possibly be a human carcinogen.

What tests can be done if a person has been exposed to crotonaldehyde?

Specific tests for the presence of crotonaldehyde in blood are not available. If a severe exposure has occurred, respiratory function tests and a chest x-ray may show whether damage has been done to the lungs. Testing is not needed in every case; however, lung complications such as pulmonary edema may develop some time after exposure.

Where can more information about crotonaldehyde be found?

More information about crotonaldehyde can be obtained from your regional poison control center; your state, county, or local health department; the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR); your doctor, or a clinic in your area that specializes in occupational and environmental health. If the exposure happened at work, you may wish to discuss it with your employer, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), or the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). Ask the person who gave you this form for help in locating these telephone numbers.

Follow-up Instructions

Keep this page and take it with you to your next appointment. Follow *only* the instructions checked below.

Call your doctor or the Emergency Department if you develop any unusual signs or symptoms within the next 24 hours, especially:

- coughing, wheezing, difficulty breathing, shortness of breath, or chest pain
- increased pain or a discharge from your eyes
- increased redness or pain or a pus-like discharge in the area of a skin burn

No follow-up appointment is necessary unless you develop any of the symptoms listed above.

Call for an appointment with Dr. _____ in the practice of _____.

When you call for your appointment, please say that you were treated in the Emergency Department at _____ Hospital by _____ and were advised to be seen again in _____ days.

Return to the Emergency Department/ _____ Clinic on (date) _____ at _____ AM/PM for a follow-up examination.

Do not perform vigorous physical activities for 1 to 2 days.

You may resume everyday activities including driving and operating machinery.

Do not return to work for _____ days.

You may return to work on a limited basis. See instructions below.

Avoid exposure to cigarette smoke for 72 hours; smoke may worsen the condition of your lungs.

Avoid drinking alcoholic beverages for at least 24 hours; alcohol may worsen injury to your stomach or have other effects.

Avoid taking the following medications: _____

You may continue taking the following medication(s) that your doctor(s) prescribed for you: _____

Other instructions: _____

- Provide the Emergency Department with the name and the number of your primary care physician so that the ED can send him or her a record of your emergency department visit.

- You or your physician can get more information on the chemical by contacting: _____ or _____, or by checking out the following Internet Web sites: _____; _____.

Signature of patient _____ Date _____

Signature of physician _____ Date _____