

This fact sheet answers the most frequently asked health questions (FAQs) about 1,1,1-trichloroethane. For more information, call the ATSDR Information Center at 1-888-422-8737. This fact sheet is one in a series of summaries about hazardous substances and their health effects. It is important you understand this information because this substance may harm you. The effects of exposure to any hazardous substance depend on the dose, the duration, how you are exposed, personal traits and habits, and whether other chemicals are present.

HIGHLIGHTS: Exposure to 1,1,1-trichloroethane usually occurs by breathing contaminated air. It is found in building materials, cleaning products, paints, and metal degreasing agents. You are not likely to be exposed to large enough amounts to cause adverse health effects. Inhaling high levels of 1,1,1-trichloroethane can cause you to become dizzy and lightheaded. Exposure to much higher levels can cause unconsciousness and other effects. This substance has been found in at least 823 of the 1,662 National Priorities List sites identified by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

What is 1,1,1-trichloroethane?

1,1,1-Trichloroethane is a synthetic chemical that does not occur naturally in the environment. It also is known as methylchloroform, methyltrichloromethane, trichloromethylmethane, and α -trichloromethane. Its registered trade names are chloroethene NU® and Aerothene TT®.

No 1,1,1-trichloroethane is supposed to be manufactured for domestic use in the United States after January 1, 2002 because it affects the ozone layer. 1,1,1-Trichloroethane had many industrial and household uses, including use as a solvent to dissolve other substances, such as glues and paints; to remove oil or grease from manufactured metal parts; and as an ingredient of household products such as spot cleaners, glues, and aerosol sprays.

What happens to 1,1,1-trichloroethane when it enters the environment?

- ❑ Most of the 1,1,1-trichloroethane released into the environment enters the air, where it lasts for about 6 years.
- ❑ Once in the air, it can travel to the ozone layer where sunlight can break it down into chemicals that may reduce the ozone layer.
- ❑ Contaminated water from landfills and hazardous waste sites can contaminate surrounding soil and nearby surface water or groundwater.
- ❑ From lakes and rivers, most of the 1,1,1-trichloroethane evaporates quickly into the air.

❑ Water can carry 1,1,1-trichloroethane through the soil and into the groundwater where it can evaporate and pass through the soil as a gas, then be released to the air.

❑ Organisms living in soil or water may also break down 1,1,1-trichloroethane.

❑ It will not build up in plants or animals.

How might I be exposed to 1,1,1-trichloroethane?

❑ Breathing 1,1,1-trichloroethane in contaminated outdoor and indoor air. Because 1,1,1-trichloroethane was used so frequently in home and office products, you are likely to be exposed to higher levels indoors than outdoors or near hazardous waste sites. However, since 2002, 1,1,1-trichloroethane is not expected to be commonly used, and therefore, the likelihood of being exposed to it is remote.

❑ In the workplace, you could have been exposed to 1,1,1-trichloroethane while using some metal degreasing agents, paints, glues, and cleaning products.

❑ Ingesting contaminated drinking water and food.

How can 1,1,1-trichloroethane affect my health?

If you breathe air containing high levels of 1,1,1-trichloroethane for a short time, you may become dizzy and lightheaded and possibly lose your coordination. These effects rapidly disappear after you stop breathing contaminated air. If you breathe in much higher levels, you may become unconscious, your blood pressure may decrease, and your heart may stop beating. Whether breathing low levels of 1,1,1-trichloroethane for a long

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time causes harmful effects is not known. Studies in animals show that breathing air that contains very high levels of 1,1,1-trichloroethane damages the breathing passages and causes mild effects in the liver, in addition to affecting the nervous system. There are no studies in humans that determine whether eating food or drinking water contaminated with 1,1,1-trichloroethane could harm health. Placing large amounts of 1,1,1-trichloroethane in the stomachs of animals has caused effects on the nervous system, mild liver damage, unconsciousness, and even death. If your skin contacts 1,1,1-trichloroethane, you might feel some irritation. Studies in animals suggest that repeated exposure of the skin might affect the liver and that very large amounts may cause death. These effects occurred only when evaporation was prevented.

How likely is 1,1,1-trichloroethane to cause cancer?

Available information does not indicate that 1,1,1-trichloroethane causes cancer. The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) and the EPA have determined that 1,1,1-trichloroethane is not classifiable as to its carcinogenicity in humans.

How can 1,1,1-trichloroethane affect children?

Children exposed to large amounts of 1,1,1-trichloroethane probably would be affected in the same manner as adults. In animals, it has been shown that 1,1,1-trichloroethane can pass from the mother's blood into a fetus. When pregnant mice were exposed to high levels of 1,1,1-trichloroethane in air, their babies developed more slowly than normal and had some behavioral problems. However, whether similar effects occur in humans has not been demonstrated.

How can families reduce the risk of exposure to 1,1,1-trichloroethane?

Children can be exposed to 1,1,1-trichloroethane in household products, such as adhesives and cleaners. Parents should store household chemicals out of reach of young children to prevent accidental poisonings or skin irritation. Always store household chemicals in their original labeled containers. Never store household chemicals in containers that children would find attractive to eat or drink from, such as old soda bottles. Keep your Poison Control Center's number near the phone.

Sometimes older children sniff household chemicals in an attempt to get high. Your children may be exposed to 1,1,1-trichloroethane by inhaling products containing it. Talk with your children about the dangers of sniffing chemicals.

Is there a medical test to show whether I've been exposed to 1,1,1-trichloroethane?

Samples of your breath, blood, and urine can be tested to determine if you have recently been exposed to 1,1,1-trichloroethane. In some cases, these tests can estimate how much 1,1,1-trichloroethane has entered your body. To be of any value, samples of your breath or blood have to be taken within hours after exposure, and samples of urine have to be taken within 2 days after exposure. However, these tests will not tell you whether your health will be affected by exposure to 1,1,1-trichloroethane. The exposure tests are not routinely available in hospitals and clinics because they require special analytical equipment.

Has the federal government made recommendations to protect human health?

EPA regulates the levels of 1,1,1-trichloroethane that are allowable in drinking water. The highest level of 1,1,1-trichloroethane allowed in drinking water is 0.2 parts 1,1,1-trichloroethane per 1 million parts of water (0.2 ppm).

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has set a limit of 350 parts 1,1,1-trichloroethane per 1 million parts of air (350 ppm) in the workplace.

Reference

Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR). 2006. Toxicological Profile for 1,1,1-Trichloroethane (Update). Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service.

Where can I get more information? For more information, contact the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, Division of Toxicology and Environmental Medicine, 1600 Clifton Road NE, Mailstop F-32, Atlanta, GA 30333. Phone: 1-888-422-8737, FAX: 770-488-4178. ToxFAQs Internet address via WWW is <http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaq.html>. ATSDR can tell you where to find occupational and environmental health clinics. Their specialists can recognize, evaluate, and treat illnesses resulting from exposure to hazardous substances. You can also contact your community or state health or environmental quality department if you have any more questions or concerns.

