



FACT SHEET

Injuries and Mass Casualty Events:

Information for the Public (see also Information for Health Professionals

<http://www.bt.cdc.gov/masscasualties/injuriespro.asp>)

If you are injured or think you are injured, seek medical attention right away. Injuries that occur during a mass casualty event are at high risk for infection and other long lasting health effects.

What Injuries Occur Most Often?

The most severe injuries in mass casualty events are fractures, burns, lacerations, and crush injuries. However, the most common injuries are eye injuries, sprains, strains, minor wounds, and ear damage.

Why Do These Injuries Occur in Mass Casualty Events?

- Eye injuries and irritation can occur from excess particles (such as soot, dirt, powder, paint chips), fumes or smoke present in the air after a disaster event. More serious eye problems can result from metal or glass fragments that enter the eye at a high speed.
- Sprains and strains are common in these situations and can occur as people escape the scene, fall, are thrown or pushed down by a force, or carry others who are in need of assistance.
- Minor wounds can be caused by flying debris and falling on or scraping against sharp objects.
- Eardrum damage can occur from a foreign body entering the ear, a blow or jolt to the head, or an extreme and sudden noise (i.e. explosion) all of which are likely in a mass casualty event.

How Do Mass Casualty Events Affect My Health?

It is normal for people to suffer emotional and physical stress after a mass casualty event, even if they are not at or near the scene. This additional stress can make existing health conditions worse (for example, diabetes) or trigger a new health problem (for example, heart attack, depression). If a mass casualty event occurs, try to take care of yourself by:

- Maintaining healthy eating, exercise, and sleeping habits;
- Continuing to take your medicine as prescribed by your physician;
- Keeping with your daily routine;
- Talking to people about your feelings and concerns.

What Should I Do If I Have a Health Problem?

Seek medical attention immediately. It is important to see a doctor for injuries and other health problems that arise or worsen after a mass casualty event. Proper medical attention can help prevent complications and long-lasting health effects.

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Listen to your local news to identify which hospitals or clinics are open. In mass casualty events, certain hospitals may be closed or only open to certain kinds of patients. However, many other hospitals and clinics, especially those outside the immediate area of the event, will be available to see patients with injuries and other health problems. If you are having a health problem, seek medical care. Do not delay because of a mass casualty event.

For More Information

- Visit the website of your state health department. (<http://www.cdc.gov/other.htm#states>)
- Visit the website of CDC's Injury Center for injury information and resources (<http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/>)

For more information, visit www.bt.cdc.gov/masscasualties,
or call CDC at 800-CDC-INFO (English and Spanish) or 888-232-6348 (TTY).

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