



PUBLIC FACT SHEET

LEWISITE

What is lewisite?

Lewisite is a chemical warfare agent that causes blistering when it comes in contact with skin. Lewisite is an oily, colorless liquid in its pure form and can appear amber to black in its impure form. Lewisite has an odor like geraniums.

What are possible methods of exposure?

- breathing air that contains lewisite
- skin or eye contact with air containing lewisite
- touching or drinking water that contains lewisite

What are possible symptoms of lewisite exposure?

Signs and symptoms occur immediately following a lewisite exposure.

Skin contact:

- pain and irritation within seconds to minutes
- redness within 15 to 30 minutes
- blisters within several hours

Eyes:

- severe pain and irritation
- tearing
- swelling

Respiratory tract:

- sneezing
- runny nose
- hoarseness
- sinus pain

How is lewisite detected?

Lewisite has an odor similar to geraniums.

What is the treatment for exposure to lewisite?

If you have been exposed to lewisite, contact the emergency medical authorities immediately.

Treatment consists of removing the lewisite from the body as soon as possible and providing supportive medical care in hospital setting. An antidote is available and is most useful if given as soon as possible after exposure.

For more information on lewisite contact:

Ottawa County Health Department
www.miOttawa.org

Center for Disease Control and Prevention
www.bt.cdc.gov/agent/lewisite/
Phone: (888) 246-2675