



Cyanide poisoning - Recommendations on first aid treatment for employers and first aiders

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First-aid treatment for cyanide poisoning

- In all cases: Speed is essential
- Arrange for immediate medical attention and transfer to hospital
- Protect yourself and the casualty from further exposure during decontamination and treatment

Inhalation

- Remove patient from exposure.
- Keep warm and at rest.
- High flow oxygen should be administered as soon as possible.
- If breathing has stopped begin cardiopulmonary resuscitation. Oxygen should be delivered using a suitable mechanical device such as a bag and mask. **Do not use mouth-to-mouth resuscitation.**

Skin contact

- Remove all contaminated clothing immediately.
- Wash the skin with plenty of water.
- If there is any sign of respiratory distress, treat patient as for inhalation.

Eye contact

- Immediately irrigate with water for at least ten minutes.
- If there is any sign of respiratory distress, treat patient as for inhalation.

Ingestion

- Do not give anything by mouth.
- If there is any sign of respiratory distress, treat patient as for inhalation.

Administration of oxygen and artificial respiration

- High flow oxygen administration is the most useful initial treatment for cyanide poisoning. *This means where cyanides are used sufficient people should be trained to administer oxygen.*
- If breathing has stopped begin cardiopulmonary resuscitation. Oxygen should be delivered using a bag and mask device. The employer has a responsibility to ensure that the first aider is trained to use the device.

It is recommended that employers discuss the arrangements for the medical treatment of cyanide poisoning with their local hospital (Accident and Emergency Department) or other provider of medical care.

Antidotes for cyanide poisoning

- The use of specific antidotes in the first-aid treatment of cyanide poisoning is no longer recommended. Employers are not required to keep supplies of antidotes. However, they must be available at the nearest hospital.
- Advice regarding cyanide antidotes is available to healthcare professionals on TOXBASE®, the online information database of the National Poisons Information Service (also available as an APP).

It is recommended that employers ensure the local Accident and Emergency Department or other provider of medical care is aware that cyanide poisoning is a potential risk so they can ensure they have appropriate antidote stocks.