



Chemical Warfare Agents

FACT SHEET 64-028-1116

Department of Defense Hotline: 1-800-497-6261

If you were exposed to chemical warfare agents while deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom or Operation New Dawn (2003-2011), call the hotline and provide your contact information.

General Information

- During Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation New Dawn, Service members who demolished or handled older explosive ordnance may have been exposed to chemical warfare agents.
- The chemical warfare agents in the ordnance identified thus far were blister agents (mustard agent) or nerve agents (sarin).
- Exposure to either agent was uncommon, but exposure to sarin was less common than to mustard.
- The likelihood of long-term effects from a single exposure is related to the severity of the exposure. The severity of exposure is estimated from the signs and symptoms at the time and how long it took for them to develop.
- The Department of Defense (DOD) wants to identify those who experienced symptoms following exposure to chemical warfare agent. DOD is interested in your symptoms and your current status. DOD wants to be sure that the exposure is documented in your medical record, that the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is informed, and that you understand your future health risks. DOD can provide you with information regarding your exposure to share with your health care provider, and recommend follow-up if needed.
- While DOD has identified some individuals, they are conducting medical record screenings on units, and reviewing Post Deployment Health Assessment and Reassessment forms to identify other exposed individuals. Because these methods have limitations, individuals are encouraged to self-identify by using the DOD Hotline.

Health Effects

Immediate symptoms and potential long-term health effects depend on the type of agent and the severity of exposure.

• Blister agents

- Eyes, skin and the respiratory system may be affected. Mild effects include tearing, gritty or burning sensation in the eyes, cough, runny nose, hoarseness, bloody nose, and redness of the skin. Mild effects are not expected to cause long-term health effects.
- More severe exposures may result in swelling of the eyelids, and eye pain, shortness of breath, productive cough and skin blistering. The long-term impacts to the eyes and lungs and skin are evaluated based on the severity of these effects at the time of exposure.

- **Nerve agents:** Mild or minimal exposures cause the pupils to constrict, mild shortness of breath and nausea and vomiting. As the magnitude of exposure increases, more symptoms develop such as loss of consciousness and seizures. Long-term health effects associated with mild single exposures are not common.

Reporting

- DOD is contacting Service members and Veterans who may have been exposed to chemical warfare agents in Iraq after March 17, 2003. If you were exposed and have not been contacted, please call their hotline: 1-800-497-6261.
- The VA and DOD want to ensure that affected individuals receive health education, record documentation, treatment and follow-up as appropriate.
- [Chemical Warfare Agent Medical Identification, Assessment, and Disposition Process/ Procedures](#), Revised 24 March 2015 (milBook - restricted access).

More information and References are available on the USAPHC Chemical Warfare Agents webpage: <http://phc.amedd.army.mil/topics/envirohealth/em/Pages/CWA.aspx>

If you have questions regarding this document please contact:
U.S. Army Public Health Center, Environmental Medicine Program,
DSN 584-2714; COMM 410-436-2714; or email usarmy.apg.medcom-phc.mbx.emp@mail.mil
5158 Blackhawk Road, Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland 21010-5403
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