

**CHECKLIST #23****CHECKLIST TO PREPARE AND RESPOND TO A CHEMICAL/BIOLOGICAL ATTACK**

**Assemble a disaster supply kit (see the “Emergency Planning and Disaster Supplies” chapter for more information) and be sure to include:**

- Battery-powered commercial radio with extra batteries.
- Non-perishable food and drinking water.
- Roll of duct tape and scissors.
- Plastic for doors, windows and vents for the room in which you will shelter in place—this should be an internal room where you can block out air that may contain hazardous chemical or biological agents. To save critical time during an emergency, sheeting should be pre-measured and cut for each opening.
- First aid kit.
- Sanitation supplies including soap, water and bleach.

**What to do During a Chemical or Biological Attack:**

- Listen to your radio for instructions from authorities such as whether to remain inside or to evacuate.

**If you are instructed to remain in your home, the building where you are, or other shelter during a chemical or biological attack:**

- Turn off all ventilation, including furnaces, air conditioners, vents and fans.
- Seek shelter in an internal room, preferably one without windows. Seal the room with duct tape and plastic sheeting. Ten square feet of floor space per person will provide sufficient air to prevent carbon dioxide build-up for up to five hours. (See “Shelter-in-Place” Checklist)
- Remain in protected areas where toxic vapors are reduced or eliminated and be sure to take your battery-operated radio with you.

**If you are caught in an unprotected area, you should:**

- Attempt to get up-wind of the contaminated area.
- Attempt to find shelter as quickly as possible.
- Listen to your radio for official instructions.

**What to do after a chemical attack:**

Immediate symptoms of exposure to chemical agents may include blurred vision, eye irritation, difficulty breathing and nausea. A person affected by a chemical or biological agent requires immediate attention by professional medical personnel. If medical help is not immediately available, decontaminate yourself and assist in decontaminating others. Decontamination is needed within minutes of exposure to minimize health consequences. (However, you should not leave the safety of a shelter to go outdoors to help others until authorities announce it is safe to do so.)

**Use extreme caution when helping others who have been exposed to chemical agents:**

- Remove all clothing and other items in contact with the body. Contaminated clothing normally removed over the head should be cut off to avoid contact with the eyes, nose, and mouth. Put into a plastic bag if possible. Decontaminate hands using soap and water. Remove eyeglasses or contact lenses. Put glasses in a pan of household bleach to decontaminate.
- Remove all items in contact with the body.
- Flush eyes with lots of water.
- Gently wash face and hair with soap and water; then thoroughly rinse with water.

- Decontaminate other body areas likely to have been contaminated. Blot (do not swab or scrape) with a cloth soaked in soapy water and rinse with clear water.
- Change into uncontaminated clothes. Clothing stored in drawers or closets is likely to be uncontaminated.
- If possible, proceed to a medical facility for screening.

### **What to do after a biological attack**

In many biological attacks people will not know they have been exposed to an agent. In such situations the first evidence of an attack may be when you notice symptoms of the disease caused by an agent exposure and you should seek immediate medical attention for treatment.

In some situations, like the anthrax letters sent in 2001, people may be alerted to a potential exposure. If this is the case, pay close attention to all official warnings and instructions on how to proceed. The delivery of medical services for a biological event may be handled differently to respond to increased demand. Again, it will be important for you to pay attention to official instructions via radio, television, and emergency alert systems.

If your skin or clothing comes in contact with a visible, potentially infectious substance, you should remove and bag your clothes and personal items and wash yourself with warm soapy water immediately. Put on clean clothes and seek medical assistance.

For more information, visit the website for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [www.bt.cdc.gov](http://www.bt.cdc.gov).