



## CYANIDES

### What are CYANIDES?

Cyanides are industrial chemicals and have been used in the past as chemical warfare agents. They include hydrogen cyanide, hydrocyanic acid, prussic acid and cyanogen chloride. Cyanides are colorless or pale blue in liquid form with an almond-like odor. They can be explosive at room temperature.

### Signs and Symptoms:

Symptoms depend on amount and route of exposure.

**Moderate exposure signs:** difficulty breathing, pink skin color, dizziness, nausea, vomiting, headache, eye irritation, and sleepiness.

**High exposure signs:** All of the above signs plus loss of consciousness or coma, seizures, extreme difficulty breathing, heart failure and death. It can cause death in as little as 1-15 minutes.

### Route of Exposure:

Primary route is by inhalation or swallowing. It can also be absorbed through the skin or eyes.

### Treatment:

Supportive hospital care and medicines used by emergency and hospital workers are helpful in treating cyanide poisoning. "Pumping" the stomach is also helpful if cyanides have been swallowed.

### Diagnosis:

Based on known or suspected exposure.

### What can you do?

Emergency response leaders may direct people to evacuate or "shelter in place."

### Whom do you call?

Delaware Division of Public Health: 1-888-295-5156.

### Contact Information:

Visit the CDC website for Emergency Preparedness and Response: [www.bt.cdc.gov](http://www.bt.cdc.gov).