



RADIATION EXPOSURE

What is RADIATION EXPOSURE?

Radiation is a form of energy. At high doses, radiation can be a serious health hazard. Exposure to very high levels of radiation over a short time (minutes) can cause Acute Radiation Syndrome (ARS), also called radiation sickness. A serious accident at a nuclear facility, or an act of terror like exploding a radioactive bomb, could cause radiation to be released. After such a serious accident or terrorist incident, radioactive fallout could extend beyond the point of impact, potentially increasing people's risk of developing cancer over time.

Routes of Exposure:

Exposure to radiation takes place through inhaling dusts suspended in the air or from dusts deposited on the skin or clothing. Exposure can also occur by contact with materials released at the point of impact (explosion or accident).

Signs and Symptoms:

Signs and symptoms depend on the amount of radiation absorbed by the body, type of radiation, route of exposure, and the length of time a person is exposed. After a serious incident, health effects could range from skin reddening to cancer and death. The immediate symptoms of ARS are nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea. Later, bone marrow depletion may lead to weight loss, loss of appetite, flu-like symptoms, infection, and bleeding. ARS may cause death within a few days or months, depending on the radiation dose.

What can you do?

Emergency response leaders may direct people to evacuate or "shelter in place." Staying in your home may protect you from exposure to radiation. The safest place in your home during a radiation emergency is a centrally located room or basement without windows.

Treatment:

Hospital care for persons exhibiting signs and symptoms after a serious accident.

Diagnosis:

Based on known or suspected exposure.

Whom do you call?

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

For more information:

For more information about health effects of radiation exposure, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website: www.emergency.cdc.gov/.