

# Ricin



## What is ricin?

Ricin is a very dangerous poison. It is made from a plant called *castor*.



## What does ricin look like?

If terrorists made ricin into a poison, it would be:

- A mist or powder that you could breathe, or
- A powder that can be put in food or water.

If ricin is made into a mist, or put in food or water, you can't see it or smell it.

## Can I die if I get exposed to ricin?

Yes, you can die within hours. But, if you are alive after 3-5 days, you will probably recover.

## What are the symptoms of ricin poisoning?

If you **breathe** ricin, the first symptoms are:

- difficulty breathing or tightness in the chest
- fever
- cough
- nausea

Then, you may have heavy sweating, fluid in your lungs, serious breathing problems, and your skin may turn blue. Finally, you stop breathing and die.

If you **swallow** ricin, the first symptoms are:

- vomiting
- diarrhea (sometimes with blood)
- hallucinations
- seizures (your body will shake)
- blood in your urine

Within several days, your liver, spleen and kidneys stop working, and you die.

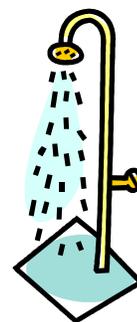
If ricin **touches** your skin or eyes, they will turn red and you will feel pain.

## What should I do if I think I was exposed to ricin?

**Call 911.**

Then, if you *breathed* or *touched* ricin, do these things quickly:

- **Move away.** If you were outdoors, leave that place. If you were indoors, go outside.
- **Take off your outer layers of clothing.** Don't pull any clothes over your head – **cut them off instead.** Try not to touch the outside of your clothing. It may have ricin on it.
- **Wash yourself.** Use lots of soap and water. If your eyes are burning or blurry, rinse them with plain water for 10 to 15 minutes.
- **If you wear glasses, wash them with soap and water.** You can wear them after you wash them. If you wear contacts, take them out and do not put them back in.
- **Throw out your clothes.** After you wash, use rubber gloves or put plastic bags on your hands to put the clothes you were wearing in a plastic bag. Also, put anything else that touched your clothing in the bag. If you wear contacts, put them in the bag, too.
- **Seal the plastic bag.** Then seal that bag inside another plastic bag. (Tell the emergency responders where you left the bag.)



If you *swallowed* ricin:

- **Call 911.**
- Do not eat or drink anything.
- **Do not try to make yourself vomit.**



## For more information...

Call CDC for help in English or Spanish:  
800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636)  
888-232-6348 (TTY)

Or visit: [www.cdc.gov/ricin](http://www.cdc.gov/ricin)  
[www.dhs.ca.gov/epo](http://www.dhs.ca.gov/epo)