

DECONTAMINATION BY EMERGENCY MEDICAL TECHNICIANS (EMTs)

When decontaminating people who may have been exposed to a chemical agent, there are two important criteria: DO IT FAST and DO IT RIGHT! The presence of chemical agent on a person's skin, hair, or clothing is often not readily apparent. Personal decontamination must be undertaken immediately if health consequences are to be minimized. Quickly reducing the amount of agent contamination is critical in minimizing the adverse health effects to the exposed person and in preventing the spread of secondary contamination to other people or objects.

With possible chemical agent exposure you must (1) remove people from the environment containing the agent, and (2) remove the agent from the individual's skin and hair.

Begin immediately to decon, even if person has already performed self or buddy decon. You must be trained, equipped, and properly clothed to decon an injured person before transporting a patient to a care facility.

Appropriate protective clothing and equipment is needed for chemical agents.

Perform decon according to these priorities:

Priority 1: Contaminated and require prompt medical attention due to agent exposure or severe injury

Priority 2: Exhibiting signs/symptoms of agent exposure

Priority 3: Contaminated but not exhibiting signs/symptoms and don't require immediate attention

Priority 4: Suspected or self-reported to be contaminated but show no signs of agent toxicity.

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DECON PROCEDURES:

1. Remove person's outer clothing by cutting clothing and lifting person free onto wire stretcher or one with non-absorbent surface.
2. Remove rest of clothing by cutting it and pulling it from underneath person and removing personal items such as billfolds or wigs, hearing aids and artificial limbs. Place in agent-impermeable bag, seal and label with person's name, other I.D., and store for later disposition.
3. Remove eyeglasses and contact lenses; place eyeglasses in an agent-impermeable bag for later disposition or decontamination, label bag.
4. Remove bandage material, exercising extreme care when removing bandages used to control bleeding.
5. Wash body surfaces with a liquid soap and water solution, or with reagents from the Army skin decon kit. Flush eyes with copious amounts of clear water.
6. Carefully decon persons with suspected mustard exposure. Body crevices and warm, moist areas are very susceptible to effects of mustard
7. Mark person with casualty tag, hospital bracelet, or by writing directly on chest or forehead with indelible marker indicating specific treatment and completion time.
8. Provide person with clean clothing
9. Apply fresh bandages where necessary to control bleeding and place injured person in transport vehicle.
10. Decon chemical protective clothing of care provider using a buddy-decon system.

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