



# District Health Department No. 2

*Northeast Michigan's Community Health Department*

## RICIN

### WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

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#### WHAT IS RICIN?

Ricin is a poison that can be made from the waste left over of processing castor beans. It can be in the form of a powder, mist or a pellet and can be dissolved in water or weak acid.

#### HOW CAN YOU BE EXPOSED TO RICIN?

It would take a deliberate act to make ricin and use it to poison people. Accidental exposure is highly unlikely. It can be inhaled in a mist or powder form or can be in food or water and then swallowed.

#### CAN RICIN BE SPREAD FROM PERSON TO PERSON?

Ricin poisoning is not contagious. It cannot be spread from person to person through causal contact with an infected individual. One would have to come into direct contact with ricin to become infected.

#### WHAT ARE THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF RICIN EXPOSURE?

The symptoms of Ricin depend on the route of exposure. Many organs can be affected in severe cases. Initial symptoms of Ricin poisoning may occur within 8 hours of exposure. Inhalation: Within inhaling ricin, it is likely that symptoms would be difficult breathing, fever, cough, nausea, and tightness in the chest. Also, excess fluid in the lungs may occur and the skin may turn blue. Ingestion: If someone swallows ricin, vomiting and diarrhea may/may not be bloody can occur. Also, severe dehydration, low blood pressure, hallucinations, seizures and eventually, organ failure may occur over time.

#### HOW CAN RICIN POISONING BE TREATED?

There is no antidote that exists for ricin poisoning. The best way to treat ricin is to avoid being exposed to ricin. If exposure can not be avoided, the most important factor is getting the ricin off or out of your body as quickly as possible. Medical care to minimize the affects of poisoning is the best way to treat an individual for ricin poisoning.

For more information on Ricin, please visit the Center's for Disease Control website at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) or call District Health Department #2 at 1-800-504-2650.