

Is Smallpox Contagious Before Symptoms Show?

A person with smallpox is sometimes contagious with onset of fever, but the person becomes most contagious with the onset of rash. An infected person can spread the disease through the air with prolonged direct face-to-face contact, infected bodily fluids, or contaminated objects such as bedding or clothing. The infected person is contagious until the last smallpox scab falls off.

Once Exposed, is it Too Late to Get a Vaccination?




Vaccination within three days of exposure will completely prevent or significantly reduce the severity of the disease in the vast majority of people. Vaccination within 4-7 days after exposure likely offers some protection from disease or may modify the severity of the disease.

How Can I Recognize a Bio-Terrorism Hoax?

If you are not sure whether a bioterrorism report is true or not, check with credible sources, such as CDC's Health-Related Hoaxes and Rumors Website at http://www.cdc.gov/hoax_rumors.htm. A number of Internet sites are also available regarding urban legends and hoaxes, including:

<http://www.snopes2.com>
<http://hoaxbusters.ciac.org>





You can get more information from the CDC Control and Prevention Public Response Hotline:

-  English: (888) 246-2675
-  Español: (888) 246-2857
-  TTY: (866) 874-264

Conclusions

It is difficult, if not impossible, to predict the time or location of a terrorist biological attack without adequate information. The only sure way to prevent such attacks is by gathering and acting upon intelligence in a timely manner and by sharing that information with other law enforcement agencies. Our best tool in the war on terrorism is you, the public.

If you have suspicions about terrorist activities in your community, you should obtain as much information as possible, including:

-  Date, time, and location of the incident
-  Physical identifiers of the person or persons
-  Any vehicle descriptions
-  And a description of the suspicious activity.

THEN call the DPS Texas Fusion Center at:

(512) 424-7981 (in Austin area)
1-866-786-5972 (outside Austin area)

You may also submit your information via the Emergency Response Network web site at

<https://www.texasalert.tx.gov>

or send an email to:

TXFusion@txdps.state.tx.us

You may also mail in your information to:

Texas Department of Public Safety
Criminal Intelligence Service
PO Box 4087
Austin, TX 78773-0420

Some of the information in this brochure was provided by the Center for Technology and National Security Policy, National Defense University, Fort McNair, Washington DC.



A Public Guide to Dealing With a Biological Attack

Prepared and distributed by the

**Texas Department of Public Safety
Criminal Intelligence Service**

PO Box 4087
Austin, TX 78773-0420

Introduction

This brochure is intended to answer many frequently asked questions and provide information that will help to understand, prepare for, and respond to a biological attack

What is a Biological Attack?

A biological attack is one that makes use of biological agents or pathogens, such as bacteria or a virus, which are harmful to living beings and/or vegetation. The goal of a biological attack is to cause harm to targeted people either directly, by bringing people into contact with the agents; or indirectly, by infecting other animals or plants that would in turn cause harm to the general population.

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Signs of a Biological Attack

Unlike an explosion, a biological attack may or may not be immediately obvious. While it is possible that you will see signs of a biological attack—as was sometimes the case with the anthrax mailings—it is more likely that local health care workers will report a pattern of unusual illness or there will be a wave of sick people seeking emergency medical attention. You will probably learn of the danger through an emergency radio or TV broadcast, or some other signal used in your community. If you have recently sought medical attention for a related symptom, you might get a telephone call from medical personnel, or emergency response workers may come to your home.

Biological Agents of Concern

The "Category A" list of biological threat agents—as classified by the Center of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)—includes the germs that cause anthrax, botulism, plague, smallpox, tularemia, and hemorrhagic fever viruses such as Ebola. These infectious diseases cause potentially high death rates, could trigger public panic, and require special action to cure and contain. A few are contagious: smallpox, plague, and Ebola. More than a dozen other types of biological disease threats are classified by the CDC as generally less dangerous but still capable of killing many victims.






How can I Prepare for a Biological Attack?

-  Stockpile three days of non-perishable food
-  Stockpile three days of water (three gallons per person)
-  Develop a family contact plan (how to get in touch via phone, Internet, or other method)
-  Stockpiling antibiotics is NOT recommended
-  Purchasing a gas mask is NOT recommended

How Can I Protect Myself & My Family?

Emergency management teams will let you know if you need to evacuate a specific area.

Self-isolation will protect you and your family from contagious diseases. Most agents are destroyed by bleach, or in some cases soap and water. Do NOT drink bleach or use on skin.

-  If possible, remain at home
-  You have time—treatment does not have to start immediately
-  Listen to local news
-  If needed, you will be told where to obtain treatment
-  Do NOT immediately rush to an emergency room

What Should I Do if I am in a Building During an Attack?

Stay in your area so that you do not kick up dust. Cover your mouth with a handkerchief or clothing. If a letter or package is the source of the biological material, close the doors and windows of the room where the source is located and turn off air conditioning, heating, and fans. Shout only as a last resort as shouting can cause you to inhale dangerous amounts of dust.

Should I Buy Disposable Masks?

Having disposable (paper) masks in a home emergency kit is not a bad idea, but they are not absolutely necessary, and offer little protection against biological components. In an emergency, you can get the same amount of protection by placing an article of clothing—a shirt or blouse, or a handkerchief—over your mouth and nose. In some cases, even several days after an attack, medical authorities may want you to wear a simple paper mask when you go outside, so having them on-hand would be convenient. In any situation where there is a lot of dust and debris—for example, following any type of explosion—it is a good idea to cover your mouth and nose, to prevent your lungs from being damaged.

Should I Stockpile Antibiotics?

NO. There is no single pill that can protect against all types of biological agents, and antibiotics have a limited "shelf life" before they lose their strength. Also, antibiotics can cause side effects, and unless you store and take the drug properly, it may not work or may cause you to become ill. For most bacterial agents, the antibiotic regime must be specific for the agent and be prescribed by medical personnel.

Will Tapwater be Drinkable?

It would be extremely difficult for a terrorist to contaminate our drinking water supplies to cause widespread illness. Anything deliberately put into the water supply would be greatly diluted, and water treatment facilities routinely filter the water supply and add chlorine in order to kill harmful germs. However, citizens can protect themselves by boiling their drinking water, which may kill any microorganisms that may have survived the municipal filtration systems

How to Distinguish Anthrax from a Cold or the Flu?

A runny nose is a rare symptom of anthrax. A person who has a runny nose along with other common flu-like symptoms is far more likely to have the common cold or flu than to have anthrax. Flu-like symptoms outside of the 'flu-season' should be a cause for individuals to seek medical attention.

How Long Can the Smallpox Virus Survive When Airborne?

The smallpox virus is fragile. In lab experiments, when smallpox is airborne, 90% of the smallpox dies within 24 hours; in the presence of sunlight, this percentage is even greater.