



CONSUMER ALERT

ANTHRAX and Similar Tools of Bio-terrorism.

What are the Concerns and what steps can be taken to reduce the risk of infection.

If a package or envelope appears suspicious, DO NOT OPEN IT
If there is suspicion that a package, letter, or anything else contains a harmful biological agent, the matter should be reported through the local emergency service by calling 119, 110 or the Ministry of Health's Emergency Management and Special Services Department.

Here are some characteristics of potentially harmful packages and envelopes:

- ✘ Inappropriate or unusual labelling for example "Do not x-ray", "Personal", "Confidential"
- ✘ Lop sided or uneven envelope
- ✘ Excessive postage or strange return address or no return address at all
- ✘ No specific person to whom it is addressed
- ✘ Postmarked from a city or country that does not match the return address
- ✘ Powdery or oily substance felt through or appearing on the package or envelope
- ✘ Excessive packaging material such as masking tape, string
- ✘ Excessive weight
- ✘ Protruding wires or aluminium foil
- ✘ A ticking sound



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Precautions When Handling Suspicious Packaging or Envelopes

If a package or envelope appears suspicious,

Do Not:

- Shake or empty the contents
- Carry or show the package or envelope to others or allow others to examine it.
- Tear or shred the package.
- Sniff, touch or closely examine the contents of the package which may have spilled

Do the Following:

- Alert others in the area about the suspicious package. Close any doors and take action to prevent others from entering the area.
- Wash hands with soap and water. Seek additional instruction for person who have been exposed.
- If possible, create a list of persons who were in the room or area when the suspicious letter or package was recognized and a list of persons who may have handled the package or letter.
- Advise the public health authorities and law enforcement officials.

How Do Persons Become Infected?

Direct person-to-person spread of anthrax is extremely unlikely and anthrax is not contagious. There is therefore no need to quarantine individuals suspected of being exposed to anthrax.

- ☠ Cutaneous or skin anthrax is the most common. It usually occurs after the skin comes in contact with contaminated meat, wool, hides or leather from infected animals.
- ☠ Inhalational infection, and Gastrointestinal infection. *Inhalational anthrax has a high fatality rate.*
- ☠ Persons may be exposed in the mail handling processing sites and through the operation and maintenance of high-speed, mail sorting machines.
- ☠ There is no evidence that anthrax may be transmitted by handling money.

KNOW WHAT TO DO TO REDUCE THE RISK OF INFECTION IF EXPOSED

As with many human illnesses, “flu-like” symptoms may be displayed when one has been infected with Anthrax spores. However in most cases, anthrax can be distinguished from the flu because the flu has additional symptoms such as a runny nose. Additionally, a person could theoretically get both the flu and anthrax, either at the same time or at different times.

Symptoms of possible Infection:

- ★ Fever: temperature greater than 100 degrees F, which may be accompanied by chills or night sweats
- ★ Cough: usually a non-productive cough
- ★ Chest discomfort
- ★ Shortness of breath
- ★ Fatigue
- ★ Muscle aches
- ★ Sore throat, followed by difficulty in swallowing, enlarged lymph nodes, headache, nausea, loss of appetite, abdominal distress, vomiting or diarrhea
- ★ A sore, especially on the face, arm or hands, that starts as a raised bump and develops into a painless ulcer with a black area in the center

How to Address Children’s Fears of Bio-terrorism

- ★ Help children to feel safe. Children should be encouraged to talk about their fears. They should be reassured that parents, teachers, doctors and government officials are doing everything possible to keep them safe.
- ★ Limit children’s viewing of certain television news
- ★ Education is one’s best protection against unnecessary fear. Children are less likely to be fearful if the adults on whom they rely take the time to address their questions.
- ★ As far as the CAC is aware, there is currently no anthrax vaccine for children. Where a child may have been exposed, early identification and treatment are critical. However, children should not be given antibiotics unless a medical practitioner has carried out an examination and prescribed such treatment.

WASH hands properly with soap and water.



Controls to Prevent the Spread of Anthrax Spores:

- ✎ Workers handling mail should wear protective, impermeable (water resistant) gloves that fit. It may be necessary to wear cotton gloves under protective gloves for comfort and to prevent any skin disorders from developing. Latex gloves should be avoided because of the risk of developing skin sensitivity and allergy.
- ✎ Other types of protective gloves may be needed depending on the task, the level of protection needed, and the ease with which it may be used. These protective gloves may be worn under heavier gloves (e.g. leather, heavy cotton) for operations where gloves may be easily torn or if protection against hand injury is needed.
- ✎ Treat suspicious mail handled as potentially contaminated material.
- ✎ Hands should be thoroughly washed when gloves are removed, before eating and when replacing torn or worn gloves. Soap water will wash away most spores that may have contacted the skin.
- ✎ Clothing can be decontaminated using soap and water, and 0.5% hypochlorite solution (one part household bleach to nine parts water).

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