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WHAT IS RICIN?

- Ricin is a poison made from waste left over from processing castor beans.
- It can be in the form of a powder, a mist, a pellet, or it can be dissolved in water or weak acid.
- It is a stable substance that's not affected by extreme conditions such as very hot or very cold temperatures.

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HOW IS RICIN SPREAD?

- It would take a deliberate act to make ricin and use it to poison people.
- People can breathe in ricin mist or powder.
- Ricin can get into the water or food and then be swallowed
- Pellets of ricin or ricin dissolved in a liquid can be injected into people's body.
- Ricin poisoning is not contagious. It cannot be spread from person to person.

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SYMPTOMS

Symptoms are determined by the route of exposure and amount received.

Routes of exposure/symptoms:

- **INHALATION:** Difficulty breathing, fever, cough, nausea, and tightness in the chest, heavy sweating, skin turning blue, low blood pressure, respiratory failure
- **INGESTION:** Vomiting, bloody diarrhea, severe dehydration, low blood pressure, hallucinations, seizures, and blood in the urine
- **SKIN and EYE:** redness and pain of the skin and eyes

Showing these signs and symptoms does not necessarily mean that a person has been exposed to ricin.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- **How soon do symptoms appear?**
The time from exposure to ricin to onset of symptoms can be from less than 1 hour to 12 hours or greater. Symptoms from poisoning through eating can occur within 2-3 hours. Inhalation poisoning occurs within 3 hours.
- **What is the treatment for Ricin poisoning?**
Ricin poisoning is treated through supportive medical care to minimize the effects of the poisoning.
- **Where is ricin found and how is it used?**
Castor beans are processed throughout the world to make castor oil. Ricin has potential medical uses such as bone marrow transplants and cancer treatment.
- **Who do I call if I think I have Ricin poisoning?**
Unintentional ricin poisoning is highly unlikely. If you think you have been exposed contact the regional poison control center at 1-800-222-1222.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

Department of State Health Services
<http://www.dshs.state.tx.us>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
<http://www.cdc.gov>