



Poison HOTLINE

1-800-222-1222

September 2014



Did you know

The Drug Enforcement Agency holds a National Prescription Drug Take-Back Day twice a year. This event aims to provide a safe, convenient and responsible means of disposing of prescription drugs. The April 2014 event collected 780,158 pounds of medicine.

The next event is scheduled for **Saturday, September 27 from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.** There are take-back sites across Iowa. To find a location near you click [HERE](#).

Information, including toolkit with posters, handouts and other materials, is available [HERE](#).

Pee-Eww...Sewer Gas

Hydrogen sulfide (H₂S) gas is a colorless, highly flammable and explosive gas that can be rapidly fatal. It has a rotten egg odor, but your nose will quit smelling the odor over time through a phenomenon called "olfactory fatigue." This gas is heavier than air, so it is typically accumulates in enclosed, poorly ventilated and low lying areas such as sewers, basements, manure storage tanks or septic tanks. That is how it gets its nickname "sewer gas."

Hydrogen sulfide is well absorbed through the lungs, and can be irritating to the lungs and mucous membranes. It is sometimes referred to as a "knock down gas" because even a single breath of a high enough concentration can be deadly. Hydrogen sulfide is a chemical asphyxiant, meaning it prevents cells from using oxygen. After large exposures, energy production with the cells rapidly shuts down, explaining why this gas can be rapidly lethal.

Signs and Symptoms

The severity of symptoms will depend on the concentration of the gas and length of time the person is exposed.

Inhalation: H₂S causes irritation or burning of the eyes, nose, throat, mucous membranes and lower respiratory tract. Other symptoms include shortness of breath, and in severe exposures lung hemorrhage and pulmonary edema can also occur.

Ocular Exposure: Irritation, blurred vision, sensitivity to light.

CNS Effects: Loss of consciousness, respiratory paralysis, seizures and death. CNS stimulation may precede CNS depression.

Systemic Effects: Metabolic acidosis, lactic acidosis, hypotension, myocardial depression, arrhythmias.

Treatment

There is no proven antidote for H₂S poisoning. Maintain the patient's airway, irrigate eyes to a pH of 7.0 and perform complete eye exam. Sodium nitrite therapy, as used in cyanide poisoning, has been suggested as a therapy for hydrogen sulfide exposure, but there is only anecdotal evidence that this is effective. Victims have survived without sequelae after supportive care alone.

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**POISON
Help**
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