**Cyanide Poisoning Treatment**

Depending on how sick the person is, treatment can vary.

- If the victim is completely unconscious, all attempts will be made to save the person's life. A variety of invasive measures may need to be done, such as placing a tube down the throat to breathe for the victim as well as insertion of multiple catheters into blood vessels and the bladder in order to closely monitor and evaluate the person.
- If the person's condition is not grave, he or she will still need a thorough investigation. Typically, all clothes will be removed in case any cyanide is on them, because this leftover cyanide can continue to poison both the victim and the people trying to help him or her.
- The person may also have his or her stomach pumped if a recent ingestion of cyanide-containing substances is suspected. This is done by placing a tube down the mouth and into the stomach, followed by a thorough washing out of the stomach.
- A special antidote kit also may be used if a strong suspicion for cyanide poisoning exists. It consists of 3 medicines: one is held under the nose until the other 2 can be given intravenously. Although not 100% successful, these antidotes can often prevent the cyanide from further poisoning the victim.
- If the person has carbon monoxide poisoning as well, hyperbaric oxygen therapy may be used if available. This requires placing the person in a special chamber that will give an extremely high amount of oxygen. Controversy still exists as to hyperbaric oxygen's definite role in the treatment of carbon monoxide poisoning.
- Usually the local poison control center or poison specialist (toxicologist) will be notified about the victim. Their assistance will help to determine the person's care.
- If it is determined that the risk of actual cyanide ingestion is very low, the victim may be watched for a few hours. If nothing serious happens, the person may be sent home with careful instructions to return immediately if any of the signs or symptoms develop.
- For people who have had a significant cyanide exposure, and who also have preexisting illnesses, or have an uncertain diagnosis but are too sick to go home, they will be admitted to the hospital for further treatment and observation.
Self-Care at Home

Neither serious house fires nor cyanide poisoning can be treated at home. Immediate medical attention is always required.

- First be sure that you yourself are not in danger from fires, smoke, or fumes
- Then call 911 or have someone else call 911. Speak calmly and clearly state your address, name, and what has happened. As with all first aid treatment, be sure that you yourself are not in danger.
- Check the area for fires, potentially poisonous fumes, smoke, and spilled chemicals. The victim's clothes and body can also be sources of danger if the cyanide is still on the victim.
- If you know CPR techniques, begin your assessment, but do NOT do mouth-to-mouth resuscitation without barrier protection because you can absorb cyanide in this manner. (The author knows one man who got cyanide poisoning after doing CPR on his dog!) If you do not know CPR, lay the person on the floor, preferably on his or her left side.
- Look around for pill bottles, chemical bottles, or open fires, because these could be responsible and will help the doctors treat the victim.


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