



# SARIN (GB): KEY FACTS

Sarin (also known as GB) is a man-made chemical agent originally developed as a pesticide in Germany in 1938. This chemical was involved in two terrorist attacks in Japan in 1994 and 1995 and may have been used in the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s. Sarin is a colorless, odorless, and tasteless agent that can easily vaporize into a gas. It can be spread in the air, through water, or through food. Low levels of exposure can lead to a wide range of symptoms, including watery eyes, chest tightness, weakness, and sweating. High levels of exposure may lead to unconsciousness, convulsions, and paralysis.

The following fact sheet was developed with information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Emergency Preparedness and Response (<http://www.bt.cdc.gov/agent/sarin/index.asp>) and it highlights key information about this agent.

## Is Sarin a Serious Threat?

- Sarin is classified as a nerve agent, which constantly stimulate muscles, sometimes to the point of exhaustion and paralysis.
- Nerve agents are the most toxic and rapidly acting of all known chemical agents.
- "Sarin is the most volatile of the nerve agents, which means that it can easily and quickly evaporate from a liquid into a vapor and spread into the environment. People can be exposed to the vapor even if they do not come in contact with the liquid form of sarin."  
(<http://www.bt.cdc.gov/agent/sarin/basics/facts.asp>)

## How Sarin is Spread

- Following the release of sarin into the air, people can be exposed by eye contact, skin contact, or by breathing in the vapor.
- Sarin can be easily added to water to poison the supply.
- People can eat food contaminated with sarin.
- Sarin is heavier than air and will accumulate in lower lying areas.

## Symptoms of WNV

- Because sarin does not have odor or taste, individuals may not know they have been exposed.
- Low or moderate exposure:
  - Runny nose; watery eyes; small, pinpoint pupils; eye pain; blurred vision; drooling and excessive sweating; cough; chest tightness; rapid breathing; diarrhea; increased urination; confusion; drowsiness; weakness; headache; nausea; vomiting, and/or abdominal pain; slow or fast heart rate; low or high blood pressure
- Large doses of sarin have more serious health effects:
  - Loss of consciousness, convulsions, paralysis, respiratory failure possibly leading to death
- If you are treated for low or moderate sarin exposure, recovery does not usually have long-term health effects

## Treatment for Sarin

- Antidotes must be used quickly to be effective: seek medical attention immediately to remove sarin from system
- Get to fresh air as soon as possible and to the highest ground
- Remove all clothing, wash entire body with large amounts of soap and water, rinse eyes for at least 10 to 15 minutes, and seal contaminated clothing in plastic bags. Do not handle the plastic bags – turn them over to public health officials or emergency personnel.

## CDC GUIDELINES AND RESOURCES

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CDC Sarin Home Page (<http://www.bt.cdc.gov/agent/sarin/index.asp>)  
General and technical information on the subject

Facts about Sarin (<http://www.bt.cdc.gov/agent/sarin/basics/facts.asp>)  
Answers to the most common questions

CDC public inquiry hotline (English: 1-888-246-2675, Spanish: 1-888-246-2857, and hearing-impaired: 1-866-874-2646)

Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (1-888-422-8737)

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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Checking with the CDC web site provides perhaps the best way to stay informed. The CDC updates guidelines and all web resources to reflect current information. In addition, information about sarin will be added to the Washington Business Group on Health's web site as it become available. Check [Employer Resources for Terrorism and Public Health Emergency Preparedness](#) periodically for updates.

Contact: Ian Dixon ([dixon@wbgh.org](mailto:dixon@wbgh.org)), Courtney Rees ([rees@wbgh.org](mailto:rees@wbgh.org))