



Iowa Department of Public Health Bureau of Environmental Health Services

Ethylbenzene Chemical Fact Sheet

Overview: Ethylbenzene is a colorless liquid that smells like gasoline. Ethylbenzene is found in gasoline, varnishes, paints, inks, pesticides, carpet glue, and tobacco products.

How are people exposed to ethylbenzene?

The most likely way for someone to be exposed is by breathing in vapors from products containing ethylbenzene.

Sometimes, ethylbenzene can get into water below ground. This can happen if it leaks from where it's being stored into the ground. Leaking underground and above ground storage tanks can be common sources of groundwater pollution. Some of this groundwater may be used for drinking water.

To know if you've been exposed to a chemical, ask yourself the following questions:

1. Did I breathe it in?
2. Did I touch it?
3. Did I swallow it?

If you answered "no" to all three questions, you were not exposed.

How does exposure to ethylbenzene affect my health?

Breathing in high levels of ethylbenzene for short periods can cause eye and throat irritation. Breathing higher levels can result in dizziness.

The health impact from exposure to ethylbenzene may vary from person to person. In general, chemicals affect the

same organs in all people who are exposed.

If you come in contact with a chemical, the amount and length of time can affect your reaction.

How you react to a chemical depends on:

- your health
- your genetics
- your previous exposure to chemicals (including medicine)
- your personal habits, such as smoking and drinking.

Does ethylbenzene cause cancer?

There is no evidence that ethylbenzene causes cancer in humans. Ethylbenzene has not been classified as causing cancer in humans.

How do I reduce my exposure to ethylbenzene?

Limit your exposure to products containing ethylbenzene.

- Use products according to the label.
- Store products in air tight containers to prevent evaporation into the air.
- Prevent spills when using or transporting gasoline.

- If you believe your drinking water well has been polluted with gasoline, stop using the water. Then get your water tested.

Are there standards for regulating ethylbenzene?

Water: The EPA has set the maximum not-to-exceed contaminant level of ethylbenzene in drinking water at 0.7 parts ethylbenzene per million parts of water (0.7 ppm).

Air: No standards or regulations exist for the amount of benzene allowed in the air of homes. However, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has set a standard of an average exposure for an 8-hour day of 100 part ethylbenzene per million parts of air (100 ppm) within the workplace.

References:

Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR). 2010. ToxFAQs for Ethylbenzene

This fact sheet summarizes information about this chemical and is not a complete listing of all possible effects. It does not refer to work exposure or emergency situations.

Who should I contact if I want more information?

- Poison Control Center: 800-222-1222
- Your local public health agency
- Iowa Department of Public Health



<http://idph.iowa.gov/>

- Iowa Department of Natural Resources



<http://www.iowadnr.gov/>