



Iowa Department of Public Health Bureau of Environmental Health Services

Xylene Chemical Fact Sheet

Overview: Xylene occurs naturally in petroleum and coal tar. Chemical industries produce xylene from petroleum. Xylene is added to products that remove grease. It is also used to thin paint, inks, glue, and many other products. It is commonly found in pesticide products. Gasoline and jet fuel contain small amounts of xylene.

How are people exposed to xylene?

The most likely way for someone to be exposed to xylene is by breathing in vapors from products that contain xylene.

Sometimes, xylene can get into water below ground. This can happen if gasoline leaks out 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.

Xylene can get into your body if you get it on your skin.

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 xylene affect my health?

Breathing in high levels xylene can cause headaches, lack of muscle coordination, dizziness, confusion, and changes in one's sense of balance. It also can cause

difficulty breathing. At very high levels, it can cause unconsciousness and even death.

The health impact from exposure to xylene 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 xylene cause cancer?

We do not have enough information to know whether or not xylene causes cancer. You can protect yourself by limiting your exposure to products containing xylene.

How do I reduce my exposure to xylene?

To reduce your exposure to xylene, use products containing xylene only when necessary. When you use these products, be sure to follow the directions on the label. And, stick to a few simple guidelines to be safe.

- Store pesticides, varnishes, and paints in their store-bought containers. Be sure lids are sealed tight.
- Store gasoline products in an air tight gasoline can.
- Keep windows open and fans running when you use gasoline, pesticides, varnishes, and paints inside buildings.
- 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 xylene?

Water: The EPA has determined that exposure to xylene in drinking water above certain levels may cause adverse health effects in a child.

- Concentrations above 40 ppm (parts xylene per million parts water) is the EPA 10-day Health Advisory Level for exposure in children for 10
- The EPA has set the maximum not-to-exceed contaminant level of xylene in drinking water at 10 parts xylene per million parts of water (10 ppm).

References:

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

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/>