



FIRST AID LEVEL 3

SECTION 11: POISONING

Exit Outcomes

At the end of this section you will be able to:

- *Explain six signs of poisoning.*
- *Name common household items that are potentially hazardous.*

1.1 INTRODUCTION

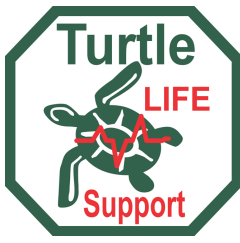
If a person suddenly becomes ill for no apparent reason, consider whether they might have ingested or inhaled poison. Household products, plant matter, decaying food, pesticides, chemicals and narcotics can all result in poisoning. In addition, many medicines designed to be beneficial in small quantities, can be very dangerous when taken in excess. **Speed** of treatment is absolutely crucial, so take the casualty to a medical facility immediately. Contact a poison information centre if needed, in order to get the latest and most efficient treatment.

1.2 EMERGENCY CONTACT NUMBERS

Cape Town: Tygerberg Poison Centre	0861 555 777 (24 hours)
Netcare 911, ER24	082 911 or 084 124

Signs and Symptoms of Poisoning will vary depending on the mode of entry into the body.

The Stomach and Appearance	The Respiratory, Circulatory and Nervous Systems
Nausea and vomiting	Shortness of breath
Abdominal cramps/pain	Dizziness
Fever and Headache	Heart palpitations
Headache	Double vision
Skin rash or burn	Confusion
Diarrhoea	Muscle twitching
Loss of bladder control	Numbness or tingling
Irritability	General feeling of weakness
Loss of appetite	Seizures
Bluish lips	Drowsiness, stupor or unconsciousness
Unusual breath odour	Chest pain



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1.3 METHODS OF POISONING

- **Ingested:** Chemicals, Contaminated food, Household products, Mushrooms, Pesticides or Medication.
- **Inhaled:** Chlorine gas, Sulphur dioxide, Carbon monoxide, Hydrochloric acid, Drugs.
- **Absorbed:** Corrosive acids, alkalis, Organophosphates, Pesticides.
- **Injected:** Drugs (Cocaine, Morphine), Insect stings, Marine stings.

First Aid Treatment for Poisoning

1. HHHHCPR.
2. Cape Town: Tygerberg Poison Centre **0861 555 777** (24 hours).
3. Look at the packaging for first aid advice.
4. If CPR is necessary, use a respiratory mask to prevent contamination with the poison.
5. Take sample of poison or vomit to hospital for doctor to prescribe correct treatment.
6. If poison in contact with the casualty's eyes flush well with water.
7. If poison or dry chemical powder is in contact with casualty's skin, dust off as much as possible and remove clothing and rinse with excessive amounts of water.
8. If a corrosive poison was ingested provide casualty with half a cup of water or milk to drink to dilute the poison, unless the packaging suggests other treatment.
9. Marine animal stings must be washed with warm water to break up the protein in the venom and wash it off.



UNIVERSAL ANTIDOTE

Use activated charcoal for ingested poison. It needs to be administered within one hour of poisoning.
50-100g in 100ml water for adults.
25-30g in 50ml water for children.

INTERESTING FACTS

- Indoor swimming pools carry a risk of chlorine gas poisoning as a large amount is used to disinfect the pool. The chlorine vapours hover just above the water's surface where the swimmer can breathe them in. To avoid the risk of poisoning the indoor pool area must be well ventilated.
- Mushrooms grown for cooking are safe to eat raw. Wild Mushrooms carry a risk of poisoning, depending on the type.

End of Section 11.