

Overview

- This guide to clinical management and health protection in Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) incidents has been written primarily for front line health care professionals in emergency departments, but we hope that it will also be useful to health care professionals in other specialties, including primary care and public health, emergency planners, trainers, and emergency service personnel
- The handbooks are arranged in six sections (generic incident management, chemical incidents, biological incidents, radiation incidents, associated injuries and illnesses, and a picture gallery), and together these contain the core information needed to plan for, recognise, and respond safely and effectively to the early stages of a CBRN incident
- This guide is not, and was not intended to be, a complete guide to emergency medicine. We may live in troubled times, but the adage 'common things are common' remains true: the unconscious patient is more likely to have taken an overdose, drugs or alcohol, to be a diabetic, or to have had a stroke than to have been exposed to cyanide. But remember: **you may be the first person to recognise that a CBRN incident has occurred. If you SUSPECT that a patient has been exposed to a chemical, to a biological agent, or to radiation that could have been released deliberately, IMMEDIATELY alert your local Health Protection Team**
- This guide is consistent with current national guidance from the Department of Health and with Health Protection Agency (HPA) guidelines. Full versions of current guidance for health professionals on planning for and responding to a CBRN incident, including action check lists, patient information sheets, and patient group directions can be found at www.hpa.org.uk and www.dh.gov.uk
- At many points in the guide, we urge you to seek further advice when it is needed. The suggested process is shown in the table below. TOXBASE (www.spib.axl.co.uk), an on-line database requiring pre-registration, is the primary source of information for health care professionals in the UK on the management of chemical poisoning. HPA National Poisons Information Service (HPA NPIS) provides advice on the clinical management of individual patients. HPA Chemical Hazards and Poisons Division (HPA CHaPD) provides advice on the management of more complex problems and chemical incidents
- Before prescribing a drug, check dosage, contraindications and interactions (eg in the British National Formulary www.bnf.org)
- Inclusion of a website elsewhere in this guide does not imply that the content of the site is endorsed by the HPA. All website details were correct when last checked, but sites are constantly moved, changed, or updated. If you have difficulty locating the information you want, searching on the name of the organisation will usually produce the link you need
- The HPA provides training in preparedness for, and management of, CBRN and other major incidents. For details, see: www.hpa.org.uk
- We intend to update individual handbooks in response to changes in national guidance, and to review the entire guide annually. We should welcome your comments, corrections, and suggestions for topics for additional handbooks. These may be sent to: erd@hpa.org.uk
- Additional complete copies of the guide and replacement handbooks may be downloaded in PDF format from: www.hpa.org.uk, and the guide can also be found within TOXBASE. You should check regularly (eg every six months and before any planned drill or exercise) for updates, amendments, training opportunities and new handbooks. If you register on the HPA site, we will be able to send updates and amendments to the guide to your department automatically
- The guide was written by Dr Julia Heptonstall and Dr Nick Gent, and the project was led by Professor Nigel Lightfoot, all of the Health Protection Agency.

**Patient with UNUSUAL, UNEXPECTED, OR UNEXPLAINED symptoms or signs?
DISCUSS the case with a SENIOR EMERGENCY MEDICINE clinician**

Senior emergency medicine clinician may discuss the case with local Health Protection Team and other LOCAL sources of advice:

Chemical

Clinical biochemist/ Toxicologist
TOXBASE
HPA National Poisons Information Service
(HPA NPIS): 0844 8920111
Health Protection Team

Biological

Microbiologist
ID physician
Infection control team
Health Protection Team

Radiation

Radiation Safety/Protection Officer
Medical physicist
Radiotherapist/oncologist
Health Protection Team

Local Health Protection Team or others may inform, or seek further advice from, NATIONAL experts:

**HPA Chemical Hazards and Poisons
Division (HPA CHaPD) 0844 8920555**

**HPA Centre for Infections, Colindale
020 8200 4400**

**HPA Radiation Protection Division
Office hours 01235 831600 or
non office hours 01235 834590**

CBRN incident response is coordinated by HPA Centre for Emergency Preparedness and Response: 01980 612 100