



Benzene

Quick Facts

- Benzene is a widely used chemical found in gasoline and other petroleum products.
- People may be exposed to benzene in the indoor air if vapors enter from contaminated soil or groundwater beneath homes and buildings. This is called vapor intrusion.
- Breathing in benzene may affect a person's immune system or may increase a person's risk of getting leukemia (a type of blood cancer).

What is Benzene?

Benzene is a flammable, colorless, liquid with a sweet odor. It is used to make other chemicals. It is one of the most commonly-made chemicals in the United States. It is found in crude oil, gasoline, and tobacco smoke. It is also used to make synthetic materials, lubricants, dyes, detergents, drugs, and pesticides.

How could I breathe in Benzene?

- Benzene vapors can get into your home and may be found underneath a building or in the ground around a building. The vapors can enter the indoor air and reach levels harmful to people's health.
- Breathing benzene vapors from gasoline, auto exhaust, or tobacco smoke.
- Living or working near gasoline stations, manufacturing plants, or hazardous waste sites.

How can Benzene affect my health?

- Breathing in benzene for a short amount of time may change a person's immune system. People exposed to high levels for a short time had other health effects, such as drowsiness, dizziness, headache, tremor, and lack of muscle coordination.
- Long-term exposure may lower the number of red or white blood cells (such as aplastic anemia, leukocytopenia).
- Benzene is a cancer-causing chemical. Long-term exposure to benzene may increase the risk of leukemia (a type of blood cancer).
- Not everyone will get sick from breathing benzene vapors. Chemicals affect people in different ways. If you have health concerns, talk to your doctor about your possible exposure to benzene.

Is there a test to find out if someone has been exposed to Benzene?

While there is a test, it may not tell you how much you were exposed to because:

- It doesn't take long for most of the benzene that you breathe in to leave your body, so tests done days after exposure will not tell you how much you were exposed to.
- Tests are not normally available at your doctor's office.

What if I've been exposed to Benzene?

- If you have health concerns, talk to your doctor about medical tests that may be appropriate for you.
- If you have one of the health problems listed on this fact sheet, it does not mean that you've been exposed to this chemical.

Want to know more?

To learn more about Benzene in your community, contact

- If benzene is found in your body, it does not mean that current health problems were caused by benzene or that it will cause health problems in the future.

How can families lower their risk of exposure to Benzene?

- Smoke outside and away from family members.
- Avoid breathing gasoline fumes when filling your car.
- Do not store gasoline or gasoline powered tools or equipment in your home.
- If benzene has been found at your home, follow advice from public health officials from your local public health department or the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS).

Tox FAQ's™ for Benzene



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