

What is Benzene?

Benzene is a chemical commonly used in the United States. It is a flammable, colorless liquid with a sweet odor. Benzene is part of crude oil, gasoline and cigarette smoke. Volcanoes, forest fires, and manufacturing may release benzene into the environment.

How can benzene affect my health?

- Breathing high levels of benzene can cause dizziness or drowsiness. It can cause a rapid heart rate, tremors, confusion, headaches or unconsciousness.
- Breathing very high levels of benzene can cause death.
- Eating food or drinking water with high levels of benzene can cause stomach aches and vomiting. It may cause sleepiness, convulsions, rapid heart rate and death.
- Long-term exposure to benzene can harm your blood, bone marrow, and immune system. This results in anemia, excessive bleeding or infections. It can also cause cancers of the blood forming organs, such as leukemia.

How are people exposed to benzene?

Most benzene in the environment comes from industrial processes.

- Benzene in the air comes from automobile exhaust, industrial emissions, and tobacco smoke.
- Air close to gas stations and hazardous waste sites can have high levels of benzene.
- If you work with glue, paint, furniture wax, or detergents, you may be exposed to benzene gas in the air.
- Volcanoes and forest fires can also release benzene gas into the air.

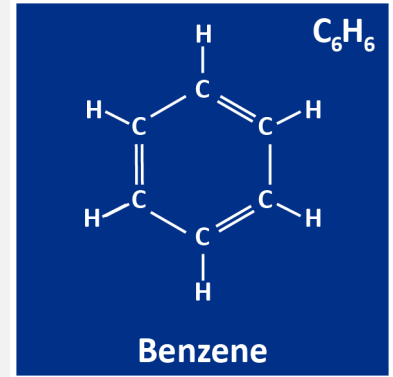
How can I reduce my exposure to Benzene?

- Stay away from gasoline.
- Do not smoke cigarettes. If you do choose to smoke do not smoke in enclosed places. Never smoke near your family, especially children.
- Ask about benzene in your workplace. Your employer must provide you with information about hazardous chemicals at work. They must give you the training and equipment you need to be safe. It's the law in Texas (Texas Hazard Communication Act, Chapter 502 of the Texas Health and Safety Code).

Is there a medical test to show I've been exposed to benzene?

- Yes, ask your doctor. A simple breath or blood tests can be done shortly after you've been exposed.
- For more information: 1-800-588-1248 or visit dshs.texas.gov/epitox

Contact the Texas Department of State Health Services if you have questions about benzene.



More information:

Texas Department of State Health Services

Environmental Surveillance and Toxicology Branch

Phone: 512-776-2222

Toll-free: 1-800-588-1248

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