



To: Physicians, Nurses, and Other Health Care Providers in American Samoa
From: The Education Department of the Nebraska Regional Poison Center
Subject: Hydrocarbon Update
Date: October 1, 2021

- The Nebraska Regional Poison Center frequently receives calls about ingestion of hydrocarbons (HCs) such as gasoline, kerosene, and lamp oil. Most are unintentional ingestions by small children.
- HCs can be derived from coal, petroleum, or plant products such as pine oil.
- The most common clinical effects are pneumonitis from aspiration and CNS depression. More volatile HCs such as gasoline or kerosene pose the greatest risk for aspiration.
- Certain HCs can affect the liver (carbon tetrachloride), kidney (toluene), peripheral nerves (n-hexane), or cause dysrhythmias (halogenated HCs, usually following inhalational abuse).
- HCs are irritating to skin and can cause chemical burns with prolonged exposure.
 - Following exposure contaminated clothing should be removed, and exposed skin washed with soap and water.
- Gastric lavage and activated charcoal are generally not recommended.
- Most patients with pulmonary effects will have signs such as coughing, wheezing, or dyspnea. Chest X-ray findings may be delayed.
 - Patients with no respiratory findings after 6-8 h are unlikely to develop pneumonitis.
 - Patients with pulmonary effects should have pulse oximetry monitored. They should be given supplemental oxygen and bronchodilators as needed.
 - Antibiotics are recommended only if bacterial superinfection is suspected, and steroids are of unproven benefit. The mainstay of treatment for HC chemical pneumonitis is supportive care.
- A complete metabolic panel is recommended following exposure to halogenated HCs, toluene, or other aromatic HCs.
- Patients with CNS depression should have cardiac monitoring, an EKG, and supplemental oxygen.

In American Samoa, health care professionals and the public can reach the Poison Center by calling: 1-800-222-1222.

Our trained staff of nurse and pharmacist specialists in poison information and physician toxicologists is available 24 hours a day to answer your questions.