

# This is an official **CDC HEALTH ADVISORY**

Distributed via Health Alert Network  
Tuesday, February 03, 2004, 004:45 EST (04:45 AM EST)  
CDCHAN-00184-2004-02-03-ADV-N

## **Ricin in Senate office building (Washington, D.C.)**

On Monday, February 2, 2004, powder was found in a mail processing room in the Dirksen Senate office building in Washington D.C. Initial tests were positive for the poison ricin. These results are considered preliminary and additional testing is underway to clarify these results and determine whether the initial test was accurate. Employees and others who may have been exposed to the suspected ricin have been told to seek medical care if respiratory symptoms occur within 12 hours of known exposure.

In addition to the risk for inhalation, potential hand-to-mouth exposure, leading to ingestion, may have occurred. Clinicians are urged to review the signs and symptoms of both inhalation and ingestion of ricin and consider the diagnosis with their patients.

### **Signs and symptoms of ricin exposure**

- **Inhalation:** Inhalation of ricin or of abrin, a closely related toxin, typically leads to respiratory irritation or cough and respiratory distress followed by pulmonary edema, respiratory failure, and multisystem organ failure. Weakness and influenza-like symptoms of fever, myalgia, and arthralgia may also be reported.
- **Ingestion:** Ingestion of ricin (or abrin, a closely related toxin) typically leads to profuse vomiting and diarrhea, which may or may not be bloody, followed by hypovolemic shock and multisystem organ failure. Weakness and influenza-like symptoms of fever, myalgia, and arthralgia may also be reported.

Additional information about ricin can be found on the CDC website at <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/agent/ricin/index.asp>.

Clinicians finding any suspected cases of ricin should immediately report information to the appropriate local or state health department. State health departments are asked to report any possible cases under investigation to CDC (770 488-7100).

*The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) protects people's health and safety by preventing and controlling diseases and injuries; enhances health decisions by providing credible information on critical health issues; and promotes healthy living through strong partnerships with local, national and international organizations.*

**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**