

# Chlorine Poisoning

## Information for Health Workers in West Africa

Health workers in West Africa should be aware of rumors that drinking chlorine or disinfectant solutions could cure or prevent Ebola virus disease (Ebola). Chlorine is **NOT** a cure for Ebola. No one should ever drink chlorine or disinfectant solutions containing chlorine.

When chlorine, sometimes called bleach, is swallowed it can make people very sick or be fatal. Be aware of the signs and symptoms of drinking chlorine.

## Signs of Chlorine Poisoning

Drinking or inhaling chlorine can cause:

- Abdominal pain
- Burning in the eyes, nose and throat
- Chest discomfort
- Coughing and/or wheezing
- Nausea and vomiting
- Skin burns

If a chlorine compound or chlorine disinfectant is swallowed, and that person feels ill as a result, seek medical attention.



## What is Chlorine?

- Chlorine is a chemical used externally in industry and found in some household products, including solutions used for cleaning or disinfecting.
- Chlorine itself is not flammable, but it can react explosively or form explosive compounds when mixed with other chemicals such as turpentine and ammonia.
- HTH chlorinating granules (also known as Calcium Hypochloride, or CaOCl<sub>2</sub>, or High Test Chlorine) and other chlorine solutions can be carefully mixed with water to create some types of chlorine solutions used externally for cleaning or hand-washing to protect against Ebola.

