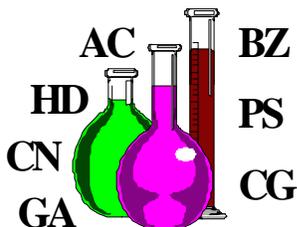


*U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine*



*General Facts About White Phosphorous  
(WP)*

218-48-1096

**General**

White phosphorous is spontaneously flammable and is an extremely toxic inorganic substance. It is used primarily as a smoke agent and can also function as an antipersonnel flame compound capable of causing serious burns.

**Synonyms**

Yellow phosphorous;  
White phosphorous;  
Phosphorous sticks dry.

**Description**

White phosphorous is a white or pale yellow, translucent, crystalline solid with a waxy consistency. It is also called yellow phosphorous due to impurities and has a match-like odor.

**Overexposure Effects**

The vapors of burning phosphorous (yellow) can be a mild irritant; continued exposure can lead to bronchitis, persistent coughing, severe burns, weakness, anemia, loss of appetite, and possibly pneumonia; if ingested, the fatal dose is 1 mg/kg. WP can cause thirst cyanosis, abdominal pain, jaundice; acute poisoning produces shock, coma and death in a short time (symptoms may subside and then return); liver and kidney damage may occur. It can cause very severe, slow-healing burns on contact and particularly deep burns with hemorrhaging. WP can also cause severe burns and permanent damage to the eyes.

Inhalation or ingestion of small amounts of phosphorous over long periods can lead to necrosis or deformation of the lower jaw, damage to teeth, and susceptibility to bone fracture. Persons with pre-existing skin disorders, eye problems, or impaired liver or kidney function may be more susceptible to the effects of the substance.

### ***Emergency and First Aid Procedures***

Inhalation: remove victim to fresh air immediately; perform artificial respiration if breathing has stopped; keep affected victim warm and at rest; seek medical attention immediately.

Eye Contact: wash eyes with copious amounts of water immediately lifting the lower and upper lids occasionally; do not wear contact lenses when working with this chemical; seek medical attention immediately.

Skin Contact: flush the contaminated skin with water immediately; remove the clothing immediately and flush the skin with water; keep skin wet until medical attention is obtained to prevent any remaining WP from burning; seek medical attention immediately.

Ingestion: if victim is conscious, give victim copious amounts of water immediately; induce vomiting after victim has swallowed the water; do not make unconscious person vomit; seek medical attention immediately.

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