

1 Tips on Benzene

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3 Benzene is a sweet-smelling, colorless, flammable liquid. It is used to make plastics, resins, and  
4 synthetic fibers such as nylon. Benzene is also naturally present in crude oil, gasoline, and tobacco  
5 smoke.

6 Acute exposure to high benzene levels can cause health effects, including seizures, coma,  
7 dysrhythmias, lung inflammation, and GI irritation. Chronic exposure can cause aplastic anemia,  
8 pancytopenia, and hematologic cancers, particularly acute myelogenous leukemia.

9 Benzene and its metabolites can be detected in blood, exhaled breath, and urine. These tests can  
10 confirm recent occupational exposure in some situations, but they have limited clinical use  
11 because they cannot predict health effects. Complete blood counts can identify hematologic  
12 abnormalities from benzene exposure.

13 Treatment is primarily supportive, and ongoing exposure should be avoided or reduced when  
14 possible.

15 Advise patients to avoid tobacco smoke and reduce exposure to gasoline fumes by standing a few  
16 feet away from the nozzle while filling vehicles. Advise patients who work with benzene that  
17 employers are responsible for informing them of their workplace hazards, providing proper PPE  
18 (personal protective equipment), and ensuring that workspaces are well-ventilated. Counsel these  
19 patients to use proper PPE and keep their work areas clean. Consult a specialist in occupational  
20 and environmental medicine regarding a monitoring plan as needed.

21 Visit ATSDR's website to learn more.