

1 Tips on Chloroform

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3 Chloroform is a sweet-smelling, colorless liquid that was used to produce some of the most
4 common air conditioner refrigerants. These refrigerants are still available in the United States but
5 are being phased out because they deplete the ozone layer. Chloroform is also used to make
6 polymers found in non-stick coatings. It is also formed during chlorination treatment of drinking
7 water and wastewater as well as the bleaching of pulp and paper. Chloroform can form naturally in
8 aquatic and terrestrial environments and can persist in air and groundwater for months to years.

9 Acute inhalation of high chloroform levels can cause neurologic effects such as dizziness, fatigue,
10 headache, and coma. Chronic exposure by inhalation or ingestion of contaminated food or water
11 can cause liver and kidney necrosis. Chloroform has also been associated with liver and kidney
12 cancer.

13 Blood, breath, and urine chloroform levels have limited clinical use because they cannot predict
14 health effects. However, elevated levels can confirm recent exposure in some situations.

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

17 Counsel patients who use a private well to consider testing their water for common contaminants
18 like chloroform. Also, advise patients who work with chloroform that employers are responsible for
19 informing them of their workplace hazards, providing proper PPE, and ensuring that workspaces
20 are well-ventilated. Counsel these patients to use proper PPE and keep their work areas clean.
21 Consult a specialist in occupational and environmental medicine regarding a monitoring plan as
22 needed.

23 Visit ATSDR's website to learn more.