Mustard Gas, Biochemical Weapon

Mustard gas is a potentially deadly chemical agent that attacks the skin and eyes. It is one of the best known and most *potent* (strongest) chemical weapons. Unlike the symptoms of exposure to other chemical agents, which usually appear immediately, the symptoms of exposure to mustard gas appear 1 to 6 hours or more after exposure. This makes mustard gas especially dangerous, since victims can suffer tissue damage before they even realize they need treatment. Mustard gas also attacks a cell's DNA, so it can cause cancer and birth defects.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Mustard gas causes severe blisters and, if inhaled, can also damage the lungs and other organs. It is usually disabling, sometimes horribly so, but is not fatal.

HOW TO PREPARE AND TREAT

- No antidote exists for mustard gas exposure, so the best thing to do is avoid it.
- Immediately leave the area where the sulfur mustard was released.
- Try to find higher ground, because sulfur mustard gas is heavier than air and will settle in low-lying areas.
- If avoiding sulfur mustard gas exposure is not possible, rapidly remove the sulfur mustard gas from the body. Getting the sulfur mustard gas off as soon as possible after exposure is the only effective way to prevent or decrease tissue damage to the body.

Most of this information is courtesy of US Government CDC. In times of an emergency, much of this material may not apply when it comes to specialized care and testing. These are guidelines to help you when that care is not available. Some of this information is very technical and difficult to understand, but hopefully someone will be available for help in treatment and understanding.

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