

The most important thing to recognize is that while items can be replaced, YOU cannot be replaced, and your health is the most important thing.

### **What will happen next?**

You will be assessed by a HazMat Team member to determine what additional services you may require. People suffering more serious effects will receive priority attention:

1. Depending upon your level of exposure to the contamination, and how you are feeling, you may be able to go home.
2. You may need to go through one or more additional decontamination processes. Typically this involves taking a shower to remove all possible traces of the contaminant.
3. If you go through the shower it is very important that you CAREFULLY, BUT QUICKLY, WASH ALL PARTS OF YOUR FACE, HAIR AND BODY. You will receive additional clothing and a final medical assessment before you are discharged.
4. At any stage of the decontamination process you may be instructed to follow some additional medical procedures. These may include taking

certain medications or receiving injections.

IF YOU HAVE ANY SPECIAL MEDICAL OR PHYSICAL CONDITIONS BE SURE TO TELL A RESPONDER EXACTLY HOW YOU CAN BEST BE HELPED.

### **What do I need to do before I leave?**

Before you leave, provide your name, tracking number and contact information to a responder so that, if necessary, you can be contacted for follow-up. Rest assured that everything possible will have been done to ensure your health and safety.

## **Frequently Asked Questions About Self-Care Decontamination**

The following questions are often asked by contaminated persons and their friends and families following self-care decontamination. These questions are general in nature; your local authorities should be contacted to answer specific questions.



**Self-Care Decontamination is the 1<sup>st</sup> step towards getting clean and being safe**

## **What is Self-Care Decontamination?**

Self-Care Decontamination is an essential first-aid practice for persons who have been contaminated. It allows people to safely start to decontaminate themselves prior to the arrival of a trained Hazardous Material (HazMat) Team. Self-Care Decontamination may be all that needs to take place or may be followed by additional steps to clean off any remaining contaminants.

## **Why was I treated here instead of at the hospital?**

The problem with contaminants is that they not only stick to your clothing and skin but they can stick to other materials as well. Anyone who touches any part of you that has not been cleaned, or touches any furniture or clothing that you have touched before you have been cleaned, will become contaminated and can be harmed.

To protect hospital staff, patients and others who are being treated at the hospital it is important that no-one gets admitted or seen in the hospital until they have been decontaminated. That way everyone can be safely treated.

## **Why did I have to go through Self-Care Decontamination?**

Research has shown that most of the contaminants are on one's clothes. Quickly removing one's clothes and wiping down one's skin is the fastest way to reduce the chances of long-term health impacts. These contaminants will also be on one's hair and continue to irritate one's eyes, skin and lungs until they are removed. The longer one is exposed to these contaminants, the more likely one is to be seriously affected.

## **When will I know for sure what has contaminated me?**

Sometimes it is very easy for HazMat Team members to identify what the possible contaminant is – a container label may be clearly identified, or the person who was handling the chemical may be able to clearly state to a HazMat Team member exactly what was spilled or became airborne.

In other cases it may be more difficult to determine what chemicals have been used. HazMat Team members have air monitors they can use to determine what has caused the contamination. However, if there are a number of different chemicals involved it can take

some time to determine what has caused the contamination.

YOU WILL BE NOTIFIED AS SOON AS IT IS CLEAR WHAT THE CONTAMINANT IS AND ANY POTENTIAL IMPACTS ON YOUR HEALTH.

## **What is going to happen to my things that I have left behind?**

The items you have left behind have been identified by a unique number assigned to only you. Items will be tracked through this number and kept secure.

Items may be returned to you if they can be safely decontaminated or if the contamination was a false scare. Typically, jewelry and other metal objects such as keys can be decontaminated in various liquids and eventually returned to you. But this will take some time. Unfortunately, clothing or electronic items cannot usually be returned to you. Your local authorities will be able to tell you what compensation you may be entitled to.