

At-A-Glance

Biological Threats

Three basic groups of biological agents that would likely be used as weapons are bacteria, viruses, and toxins. Delivery methods include:

- **Aerosols**-biological agents that are dispersed into the air
- **Animals**-some diseases are spread by insects and animals
- **Food and water contamination**
- **Person-to-person**



Before a Biological Threat...

Unlike an explosion, a biological attack may or may not be immediately obvious. While it is possible that you will see signs of a biological attack, as was the case with the anthrax mailings, it is perhaps more likely that local health care workers will report a pattern of unusual illness or there will be a wave of sick people seeking emergency medical attention.

The following are things you can do to protect yourself, your family, and your property from the effects of a biological threat:

- Build an Emergency Supply Kit
- Make a Family Emergency Plan. Make sure to include your pets.
- Check with your doctor to ensure all required or suggested immunizations are up to date. Children and older adults are particularly vulnerable to biological agents.
- Consider installing a High-Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA) filter in your furnace return duct. These filters remove particles in the 0.3 to 10 micron range and will filter out most biological agents that may enter your house. If you do not have a central heating or cooling system, a stand-alone portable HEPA filter can be used.

***HEPA filters will not filter chemical agents.**

During a Biological Threat...

- In the event of a biological attack, public health officials may not immediately be able to provide information on what you should do. It will take time to determine exactly what the illness is, how it should be treated, and who is in danger.
- If you become aware of an unusual and suspicious substance, quickly get away.
- In a declared biological emergency or developing epidemic, there may be reason to stay away from crowds where others may be infected.
- Use common sense, practice good hygiene and cleanliness to avoid spreading germs, and seek medical advice.
- Do not assume, however, that you should go to a hospital emergency room or that any illness is the result of the biological attack. Symptoms of many common illnesses may overlap.

Antibiotics

While antibiotics are often an appropriate treatment for the diseases associated with biological weapons, the specific drug must match the illness to be effective. One antibiotic, for example, may be appropriate for treating anthrax exposure, but is inappropriate for treating smallpox. All antibiotics can cause side effects including serious reactions. Plan to speak with your health care provider in advance about what makes sense for your family.

Source: Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

Did you know?

A biological attack is the deliberate release of germs or other biological substances that can make you sick.

For additional information on biological threats, go to www.ready.gov.



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