



# Biological Terrorism

## Preparedness Empowers You It saves lives, property, and time.

Emergencies happen, often with little or no notice. By taking action beforehand you can be prepared for any emergency.

**Be Ready Navy!**  
I am. Are you?

Terrorists could deliberately release biological substances that harm or kill people, animals, and plants. Bacteria, viruses, and toxins—the main types of potential biological “agents”—occur in nature but can be altered to increase their ease of dispersion, potency, or resistance to medicines.

Most biological agents are hard to grow and sustain. Many die when exposed to the environment, but others, like anthrax spores, are hardy. They can be spread by spraying them into the air, contaminating food and water, or infecting animals that carry disease to humans. Many must be inhaled, eaten, or absorbed through a skin cut to make you sick; some cause contagious diseases.

Biological agents can be hard to detect, and their effects may be delayed. A biological attack could come without warning, and the danger may not be immediately recognized. The first alert may be from health-care workers noting an unusual pattern of illness. Your first warning would likely be an emergency broadcast or some other signal used in your community

## How to Prepare

Advance precautions for bioterrorism are limited:

- 1 Be and stay **informed**.
- 2 Make a family **emergency plan**.
- 3 Make an **emergency communication plan** in case family members are separated.
- 4 Stay healthy—Eat sensibly, get enough rest, and practice good hygiene.
- 5 Ensure that all required and recommended immunizations are up to date. Children and the elderly are especially vulnerable to biological agents.
- 6 Consider installing a high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter in your furnace return duct or using a stand-alone portable HEPA filter. These can filter out most biological agents that may enter your house.
- 7 Build an **emergency kit**, and be sure to include breathing filters.

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## What to Do

- In the event of a biological attack, it may take a while to determine the nature of the threat, who is at risk, and the best steps to take. Watch television, listen to radio, or check the Internet for reliable information about areas in danger, signs and symptoms, and the nature and location of available assistance.
- Try to stay in an indoor location where the air is filtered.
- If you notice a suspicious substance, move away, wear a breathing filter, wash with soap, and contact authorities.
- **If you are exposed** to a biological agent—
  - » Wear a breathing filter. If you do not have a mask, layers of fabric (t-shirt, handkerchief, or towel) or several layers of tissue or paper towels may help.
  - » Remove clothes and personal items, bag them, and follow official instructions for disposal.
- » Wash with soap and put on clean clothes.
- » Practice good hygiene.
- » Use common sense. Be alert for symptoms, but don't panic.
- » Seek medical attention. Medical treatments are available for some biological threats. You may be advised to stay away from others.
- In most biological emergencies or epidemics, it is best to stay away from crowds where others may be infected.
- **If someone is sick**, practice good hygiene—
  - » Wash hands with soap frequently.
  - » Don't share food or utensils.
  - » Cover the mouth and nose with the crook of your arm when coughing or sneezing.
  - » Consider breathing filters for patients, caregivers, and others.

## Where to Find Additional Information

- Live radio and television broadcasts will have the most current information on bioterrorism events and the appropriate actions to take.
- The following agencies offer more detailed and updated information about biological threats:
  - » Department of Homeland Security (Ready.gov) & FEMA—  
[www.ready.gov/biological-threats](http://www.ready.gov/biological-threats)
  - » Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)—  
[www.bt.cdc.gov/bioterrorism](http://www.bt.cdc.gov/bioterrorism)  
The CDC Web site offers detailed information about specific biological threats, such as smallpox, anthrax, botulism, and plague.