

Guidance: First Aid Protocol - Chemical Attack

FIRST AID FOR ACID ATTACKS

A shocking spate of acid attacks have hit the headlines in recent months.
Make sure you know what to do if you witness an attack.

DANGER:

- Make sure it is safe for you to approach and you are not putting yourself in danger by offering assistance.
- If the attack is so severe that the casualty has stopped breathing do not attempt mouth to mouth resuscitation or CPR as this will result in you being burned.

CHEMICAL BURNS

1. Make sure that the area around the casualty is safe.
2. Wear gloves to prevent the chemical from coming into contact with your skin.
3. If the chemical is in powder form, it should be brushed off of the skin first.
4. Flood the burn with water for at least 20 minutes to disperse the chemical and stop the burning.
5. Whilst you are doing this dial 999 and request an ambulance stating that you have a chemical burn casualty.
6. Avoid washing the chemical over unaffected areas.
7. Ensure that the water does not collect underneath the casualty.
8. Gently remove any contaminated clothing while flooding the injury.
9. Monitor vital signs, such as breathing, pulse and level of response.

CAUTION:

- Never attempt to neutralise acid or alkali burns unless you are trained to do so.
- Do not delay starting treatment by searching for an antidote.

CHEMICAL BURNS TO THE EYE

1. Hold the casualty's affected eye under gently running cold water for at least ten minutes.
2. Whilst you are doing this dial 999 and request an ambulance stating that you have a chemical burn casualty.
3. Irrigate the eyelid thoroughly both inside and out.
4. Make sure that contaminated water does not run into the uninjured eye.
5. Ask the casualty to hold a clean, non-fluffy pad over the injured eye.
6. Monitor vital signs, such as breathing, pulse and level of response.

CAUTION:

- Do not allow the casualty to touch the injured eye.
- Do not forcibly remove a contact lens.

PERSONAL SAFETY

- Do not touch your own face/body whilst wearing gloves as they may be contaminated.
- After removing the gloves place them in the yellow waste bag supplied with the first aid kit.
- Wash your hands thoroughly and check your clothing for chemical contamination.
- Rinse your shoes with running water including the soles.

FURTHER INFORMATION

- St Johns Ambulance: <http://www.sja.org.uk/sja/what-we-do/latest-news/first-aid-for-acid-attacks.aspx>
- Health & Safety Directorate <http://hsd.qmul.ac.uk/A-Z/First%20Aid/index.html>
- British Red Cross: <http://blogs.redcross.org.uk/first-aid/2017/07/treat-acid-burn/>