



# CREOSOTE

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## How can creosote affect my health?

Exposure to creosote may have minor to serious health effects, depending on how long you were exposed, how intense the exposure was, your age and your health history.

You may react to creosote in the following ways:

- If you touch creosote, your skin can turn red, swell, become irritated, and develop blisters and sores.
- If your eyes have been exposed to creosote, they can become irritated and develop sensitivity to light.
- Eating food or drinking water contaminated with creosote or breathing creosote vapors may cause a burning in the mouth and throat and stomach pain. Long-term exposure to creosote (for example taking herbal medicines containing creosote) can damage the kidneys, liver, and brain. Creosote-charged smoke can cause difficulty in breathing and asthma.
- Exposure to different types of creosote has caused cancer of the skin and of the scrotum.

## Can a medical test show if I have been exposed to creosote?

No medical test can show if you have been exposed to creosote, but some chemicals contained in creosote can be found and measured in body tissues (organs, muscles), urine, or blood. Since these tests require special equipment, they are usually available only at special laboratories.

## What can I do to reduce the risk of exposure to creosote?

- Wear protective clothing, such as gloves, and avoid prolonged exposure of skin and eyes.
- If you are exposed to creosote at work, shower before leaving for home, so that you do not carry creosote in your clothes, skin, hair, or tools.
- If you are exposed to creosote at work, do not wash your working clothes at home.
- Avoid prolonged exposure to creosote smoke.
- Do not use creosote inside your home or where animals are kept.
- Do not use creosote where it may come in contact with drinking water.
- Do not use creosote-treated wood in fireplaces, open fires or wood stoves.
- Avoid taking medicines containing creosote.

## Are there any regulations / recommendations to protect people from creosote?

The Federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has set a permissible exposure limit of 0.2 milligrams of coal tar creosote per cubic meter of air (0.2mg/m<sup>3</sup>) in the workplace during an 8-hour day. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) requires that spills or accidental releases into the environment of one (1) pound or more of creosote be reported to them.

### For more information contact:

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)  
401 M St., SW, Washington, DC 20460  
Right to Know Hotline (800) 535-0202  
<http://www.epa.gov>

U.S. Department of Labor  
Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA)  
200 Constitution Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20210  
[www.osha.gov](http://www.osha.gov)

Agency for Toxic Substances and  
Disease Registry (ATSDR)  
Division of Toxicology  
1600 Clifton Road NE, Mailstop E-29,  
Atlanta, GA 30333  
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