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Freon

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Freon is a trade name for a family of compounds known as fluorinated hydrocarbons. Many freons have been phased out due to environmental concerns for ozone depletion. Used as a refrigerant or dust cleaner for electronics. A gas at room temperature and a liquid when in pressurized containers.

Is it toxic?: Inhalation of low concentrations (from a leaking fridge or air conditioner) may cause irritation to the nose and throat. Inhalation of higher concentrations (from an exposure in a confined space or industrial setting) may cause more serious toxicity.

Health Effects:

Eyes: Possible irritation. Direct contact from liquid or pressurized gas may cause burns.

Skin: Possible irritation and redness. Burns may occur with prolonged contact. Potential for frostbite from direct contact with pressurized gas or liquid.

Inhalation: Irritation to nose and throat which usually subsides once out of area and into fresh air. Exposure to high concentrations may result in dizziness, confusion, loss of consciousness

and changes in heart rhythm.

What to do:

Eyes: If exposure to a gas, get outside into fresh air. If exposure to a liquid, rinse eyes with a gentle stream of lukewarm water for 5 minutes by any of the following methods and then **contact the Poison Control Centre:**

- Pour a gentle stream of water from a jug or clean teapot over the eye from the inside corner by the nose, across the eye, flowing out towards the ear.
- Submerge eye in a container (bowl, sink) of lukewarm water. Have patient open and close eye.
- Eye may be irrigated in the shower, if this can be accomplished without delay.
- Young children may be wrapped like a mummy in a towel with arms at side and held over the sink or tub or laid on counter during flushing.

Skin: Wash skin with soap and water and rinse thoroughly. If skin is blistered, appears pale, blanched or is numb contact the Poison Control Centre.

Inhalation: Get away from area and breathe fresh air. **Contact the Poison Control Centre.**

If symptoms persist after the above first aid measures contact the Poison Control Centre.

How can I prevent exposure? When defrosting an old fridge do not use sharp objects to chip away at frost build up as this may puncture the freon line. Use aerosol products in well-ventilated areas.

Need more information: Call the Poison Control Centre.

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