

Surviving a Dirty Bomb

November 2002

Fact Sheet #39

Environmental Health Programs
Office of Radiation Protection



These instructions are intended for uninjured or mildly injured persons in the vicinity of a so-called *dirty bomb*, a conventional weapon which also disperses relatively common radioactive materials.

Do not panic. A dirty bomb is thousands of times less dangerous than a nuclear weapon similar to the type used in Japan at the end of World War II. The fact that you have survived the initial explosion and you are not badly injured probably means you are going to be okay.

Take a shower. After the initial shock is over and you have moved away from the blast scene, remove your clothes and take a shower. Place discarded clothing in a garbage bag. Chances are the on-scene responders will provide a shower facility.

Do not retrieve vehicles or personal effects that are near the blast scene, especially if they are coated with visible dust from the blast.

Do not eat or drink anything that was near the scene, especially items which are not packaged. (Fresh fruits, water from open containers, etc.)

Do not waste time looking for iodine pills. These are probably not useful for the type of radioactive material you have potentially been exposed to.

Do not flood the emergency room or your doctor's office with non-emergency calls or visits. The possibility that you may have been exposed to some radioactive material is not an emergency in light of the overall situation. After the situation calms down a bit, you will probably want to discuss with a doctor the risks to your health caused by any radioactive material exposure. There is a good chance you will be afforded the opportunity to participate in long-term health monitoring.

Keep in touch with reliable media sources for further information.

Source

Office of Radiation Protection, Washington State Department of Health