

DIRTY BOMBS

A radiological dispersal device (RDD) is a device that spreads radioactive contamination. When an explosive spreads radioactive powder or pellets, it is called a **dirty bomb**. A dirty bomb is not the same as a nuclear weapon and does not have the force and destruction of a nuclear blast.

MAIN DANGERS

- **The main danger is the explosion.** May cause serious injuries and property damage
- **Immediate serious illness from radiation exposure is very unlikely** unless people are extremely close to the blast
- **Contamination, inhalation, or ingestion** of radioactive dust may create an increased risk of illness

PROTECTIVE MEASURES

- **Follow the directions of local and state authorities**
- **Stay together if you are with family, friends, or pets.** Notify authorities of your location, names of yourself and those you are with, and serious injuries or medical problems
- **Reduce the amount of time you are exposed to or contaminated by radioactive dust**
- **Seek safe shelter to protect yourself from radiation exposure**
 - *In a building:* stay there as long as it is not damaged. Seek an interior room and close all windows and doors. Turn off fan systems (heating, air conditioning)
 - *Outside:* Seek a safe building for shelter
 - *Do not leave safe shelter until advised by first responders and authorities*
- **Reduce radioactive contamination**
 - *Cover your nose and mouth with a cloth* to avoid inhaling radioactive dust. Only remove the face cover once you are in a safe place and have thrown away contaminated clothes
 - *Throw out clothing which may be contaminated.* Place the clothing in a plastic bag and store away from others
 - *Seek a safe internal room* in a building after discarding your outer clothing
 - *Avoid eating and drinking food or fluids which could have been contaminated.* Eating or drinking from sealed containers is okay if the outer surfaces have been cleaned of contamination
 - *Wash exposed skin* or shower to reduce external contamination of your body

IF YOU ARE IN A CAR

- Close the windows
- Turn off the air conditioner, heater, and vents
- Cover your nose and mouth with a cloth to avoid breathing in radioactive dust or smoke
- If you are close to a building, go inside quickly
- If you cannot get inside safely, pull over to the side of the road and stop in the safest place possible. If it is a hot day, stop under a bridge or in the shade
- Turn off the engine and listen to the radio for instructions
- Stay in the car until you are told it is safe to get back on the road



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HOW CAN I PROTECT MY...

CHILDREN AND FAMILY

- If you are together, stay together
- If you are apart, stay where you are until you're told it's safe to travel
- If your child is at school, they should follow the school's emergency plan and shelter until it is safe to travel
- Do not go to the school until officials say it is safe

PETS

- If your pets are outside, bring them inside if it can be done safely
- Wash your pets with soap and water to remove any radioactive dust

SHOULD I TAKE POTASSIUM IODIDE?

Potassium iodide (KI) protects a person's thyroid gland from exposure to radioactive iodine. Potassium iodide will not protect a person from other types of radioactive materials. It will not protect any part of the body other than the thyroid from exposure to radiation.

State and local authorities will advise you if you need to take potassium iodide following a dirty bomb incident.

ARE FOOD AND WATER SUPPLIES SAFE?

Food and water supplies will likely remain safe. Any unpackaged food or water that was close to the incident may have radioactive dust on it. Authorities will monitor food and water quality for safety and keep the public informed.

Food inside of cans or sealed containers is safe to eat. Wash the outside of the container before opening it.

HOW DO I KNOW IF I'VE BEEN EXPOSED?

You cannot see, smell, feel, or taste radiation - so **you may not know if you've been exposed**. First responders will use special equipment to determine how much radiation is present and whether it poses a danger.

Low levels of radiation exposure (like those expected from a dirty bomb) do not cause symptoms. High levels of radiation may cause nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and swelling and redness of skin.

MORE INFORMATION

 preparedness.health.maryland.gov

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MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
Office of Preparedness
and Response