



General Information About **MOTHBALLS & NAPHTHALENE**

Mothballs are a registered pesticide used to control moths and other pests in natural fiber clothing and materials, like wool. **Naphthalene is a common chemical found in mothballs at high concentrations that can be toxic to people, pets, and the environment when used incorrectly.**

Using Mothballs Safely

The label of any pesticide states where and how you can legally use the product. Mothball labels typically direct users to place mothballs in a tightly closed container that will prevent the pesticide fumes from accumulating in living spaces where people and pets can breathe them in for long periods of time. Inside tightly closed containers, the vapors released by the mothballs build up and kill moths and other fiber pests.

Because mothballs are a pesticide, using them in locations not specified on the label is illegal. Follow label instructions carefully. The following are unsafe locations where people sometimes use mothballs: attics, crawl spaces, trash cans, vehicles, gardens or other outside locations to control insects, snakes, or other wildlife. Using mothballs in containers that aren't tightly closed allows toxic vapors to escape into the surrounding air.



Always follow label instructions when using mothballs. Using mothballs in a way not specified by the label is not only illegal, but can harm people, pets, or the environment.

Preventing Exposure to Chemicals in Mothballs

Adults, children, and pets can be exposed to naphthalene in mothballs by:

- Breathing in vapors (inhalation)
- Swallowing (ingestion)
- Touching (skin or dermal contact)

You are most likely to be exposed to naphthalene by inhaling the vapors. When you smell mothballs, you are inhaling the pesticide.

Recognizing Symptoms of Exposure to Naphthalene in Mothballs

Mothballs can cause various health effects if the exposure is high enough. Mothballs slowly turn from solids to toxic vapor. Whether you get sick from being exposed to naphthalene in mothballs depends on:

- How much you were exposed to (dose)
- How long you were exposed (duration)
- How often you were exposed (frequency)

Short-term exposure can lead to:

- Headaches
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Dizziness

Long-term exposure can cause damage to your:

- Liver
- Kidneys
- White blood cells

Eating naphthalene-containing products such as mothballs can cause diarrhea, abdominal pain, painful urination, and discolored urine or feces. Most cases of mothball poisonings among small children and pets occur because mothballs can be mistaken for candy or other treats.

Keeping Pests Away From Your Property

Integrated pest management (IPM) can reduce or eliminate pests and pesticide use in a way that's affordable and effective with the least risk to human health and the environment. IPM uses pest management options that include limited use of pesticides and species-specific chemicals, biological controls, and trapping. For more information on IPM, visit:

www.dph.georgia.gov/chemical-hazards.



If you are concerned about naphthalene poisoning, contact the Georgia Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222.

Resources

Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry

www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaqs/index.asp

National Pesticide Information Center

www.npic.orst.edu/

For More Information

Georgia Department of Public Health

Environmental Health Section

Chemical Hazards Program

(404) 657-6534

www.dph.georgia.gov/chemical-hazards

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We protect lives.