

Ricin Toxin

The disease

The seeds from the castor bean plant, *Ricinus communis*, are poisonous to people, animals and insects. One of the main toxic proteins is ricin. Poisoning by eating of a castor bean is actually due to the ricin toxin. It can be in the form of a powder, a mist, or a pellet. It can also be dissolved in water or weak acid.

Cause

- Eating a castor bean
- Wearing a castor bean close to the skin
- Breathing in of an aerial spray of ricin toxin

Symptoms

Symptoms within 8 Hours of breathing in the toxin:

- Fever Cough
- Difficulty breathing
- Nausea
- Chest tightness

Symptoms that occur later with breathing in the toxin:

- Sweating
- Swelling
- Bluish skin discoloration
- Low blood pressure
- Hallucinations
- Seizures
- Blood in the urine

Symptoms within a few hours of eating:

- Abdominal pain
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea, sometimes bloody

Symptoms with several days of eating:

- Severe dehydration
- Decrease in urine
- Decrease in blood pressure

If victim survives the first 3-5 days, the chances for recovery are improved.

Treatment

Early diagnosis and treatment is vital.