What Is Benzene?

Benzene is a naturally occurring compound.



Properties

- Colorless liquid
- Sweet odor
- Evaporates quickly
- Dissolves easily in water

Benzene is a major industrial chemical made by separating it from the other natural components found in coal and oil.

It is one of the top 20 chemicals ranked for highest volume produced annually in the United States.



Benzene is used to make other chemicals and household products.

- Gasoline
- Glues, adhesives, paint strippers, and some art supplies
- Household cleaning products
- Plastics, man-made rubber, and pesticides



Benzene In The Environment

Benzene is produced naturally by volcanoes and forest fires. It is also present in many plants and animals and in fossil fuels such as coal and oil.

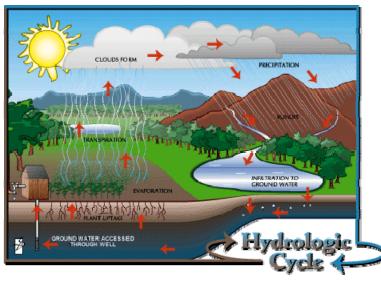




Industrial processes are the main sources of benzene in the environment

What happens to benzene when it enters the environment?

- Benzene evaporates very quickly into the air. It can pass into the air from water and soil.
- It reacts with other chemicals in the air and usually breaks down within a few days.
- Benzene in the air can attach to rain or snow and be carried back down to the ground.
- ◆ It breaks down more slowly in water and soil, and can pass through the soil into underground water.
- Benzene does not build up in plants or animals.



Health Effects Of Benzene

How are People Exposed to Benzene?

- Working in industries that manufacture or use benzene.
- Breathing emissions from burning coal and oil, motor vehicle exhaust, evaporation from gasoline service stations, and tobacco smoke.
- Consuming water that contains benzene, usually because of a spill or leak during the handling and storage of gasoline.





Short-term Health Effects

- Skin, eye, and Respiratory tract irritation
- ♦ Headache, drowsiness and dizziness
- High exposures can result in unconsciousness and even death.

Long-term Health Effects

- An increased cancer risk has been observed in humans exposed to benzene for long periods of time on the job.
- ◆ It primarily affects the blood in humans.
- ◆ It may affect the immune system.

