

NUCLEAR EMERGENCY: THE FIRST 72 HOURS

Get inside, stay inside, stay tuned. What to do in the first minutes, the first hour, the first day, and days 2 and 3 after a nuclear explosion.

■ DO THIS

Get inside. Stay inside. Stay tuned. If local officials give different instructions, follow theirs. [1]

FIRST MINUTES [1][2]

- See an intense, unexpected flash: take cover and get away from windows.
- If you are outside, lie face down to protect skin from heat and flying debris.
- After the shockwave passes, go inside the nearest building.
- You will have 10 minutes or more before fallout arrives (FEMA).

FIRST HOUR: GET INSIDE [1][3][5][8]

- Go to a basement or a multi-story building if you can reach one within a few minutes. Brick or concrete walls, underground garages, and subways work.
- Any building is safer than outside. A car is not a shelter.
- Go to the basement or the middle of the building, away from walls and roof.
- If you were outside, remove your outer layer of clothing before going in. This can remove up to 90% of radioactive material.
- Close and lock windows and doors. Turn off fans, air conditioning, and forced-air heat. Close fireplace dampers.
- Bring pets and service animals inside.
- Let people in who need shelter. Ask them to remove outer clothing, then wash.

■ WARNING

Do not go out to collect children or family. Going outside could expose you and them to dangerous radiation. Schools, daycares, hospitals, and nursing homes have plans to keep people inside. [8]

CLEAN OFF [1][5]

1. Remove outer clothing gently. Bag it and set it away from people and pets.
 2. Shower with warm water and soap. Do not scald, scrub, or scratch skin. Shampoo your hair. Keep cuts covered.
 3. No shower: wash hands, face, and uncovered skin at a sink, or use a wet cloth. Blow your nose; wipe eyelids, lashes, and ears.
 4. Put on clean clothes.
- No household cleaning wipes on skin. Hand sanitizer does not protect.
 - Tap water is safe for washing.

FIRST DAY: STAY INSIDE [1][2][4][6]

- Stay at least 24 hours unless officials say it is safe, or you face fire, gas leak, building collapse, or serious injury.
- Poor shelter (single-story wood house, no basement) and an adequate shelter within about 15 minutes: move there no later than 30 minutes after the blast.
- Sealed food and drinks already inside are safe. Wipe containers that were outside.
- Drink bottled water. Toilet tank (not bowl) and water heater water are also free of radioactive material. Boiling does not remove it.
- Keep taking your medications.
- Battery devices should work after turning off and on. Do not go outside to reset breakers.

DAYS 2 AND 3 [1][2][4][6][7]

- Keep a battery or hand-crank radio on. Text instead of calling.
- Officials will say when and how to evacuate, which routes, and where shelters are.
- Leave only when told, unless a life-threatening condition or unstable building forces you out.
- Do not eat garden food until officials say it is safe.
- Expect no significant federal response for 24 to 72 hours.
- If you evacuate, do not return until local authorities say it is safe.

IN AN EMERGENCY CALL 911. INSTRUCTIONS FROM LOCAL OFFICIALS COME FIRST.

Sources: [1] Ready.gov, Radiation Emergencies (Nuclear Explosion) (ready.gov). [2] FEMA, Planning Guidance for Response to a Nuclear Detonation, Third Edition (2022) (fema.gov). [3] CDC, What to Do: Get Inside (cdc.gov). [4] CDC, What to Do: Stay Tuned (cdc.gov). [5] CDC, How to Self-Decontaminate after a Radiation Emergency (cdc.gov). [6] CDC, Food, Drinking Water, and Medicine Safety in a Radiation Emergency (cdc.gov). [7] CDC, Preparing for a Radiation Emergency (cdc.gov). [8] CDC, Frequently Asked Questions about Radiation Emergencies (cdc.gov).
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