

Ricin

Ricin, the toxin found in castor beans, is poisonous if inhaled, injected, or ingested. It kills cells by inhibiting protein synthesis. Treatment is available, but long-term organ damage in survivors is likely.

SYMPTOMS

Inhalation

Within a few hours of inhaling significant amounts of ricin, the likely symptoms include respiratory distress, fever, cough, nausea, and tightness in the chest. Heavy sweating and fluid building up in the lungs may follow.

Ingestion

A person who ingests a significant amount of ricin will experience vomiting and diarrhea that may become bloody. Severe dehydration may result, followed by low blood pressure. Other symptoms may include hallucinations, seizures, and blood in the urine. Within several days, the person's liver, spleen, and kidneys might stop working, resulting in death.

TREATMENT

A solution of saline and glucose is used to treat ricin poisoning.



▲ Castor beans (shown on top) are used to produce Ricin, a deadly poison. They are similar in color and size to pinto beans (shown on bottom), but notice the small pointed protrusion on the end of each castor bean.