

Handling Anthrax and Other Biological Threats At The University of Cincinnati

Many facilities in communities around the country have received anthrax threat letters. The vast majority did not contain anthrax, but in a few cases persons have been infected with the disease. This sheet outlines the University procedures for handling suspicious letters and packages.

Anthrax – An Overview

Anthrax organisms can cause infection in the skin, gastrointestinal system, or the lungs. To do so, the organism must be rubbed into abraded or broken skin, swallowed, or inhaled as a fine, aerosolized mist. The disease can be prevented after exposure by early treatment with antibiotics. Anthrax is not spread from person to person.

Suspicious Unopened Letter or Package

1. Do not open, shake, or otherwise tamper with the package.
2. If a plastic bag is readily available, place the package inside the bag and seal it.
3. Leave the room where the package is, and close the door. Prevent anyone else from entering the room.
4. Dial 911 to report the incident.
5. Wash your hands with soap and water to avoid spreading any potential contamination.
6. Keep all people who were in the room together until the police arrive. Avoid direct contact with any other persons to avoid spreading any potential contamination.

Letter or Package Where Powder Spills Out

1. Do not try to clean up the powder.
2. If possible, place a garbage can or other container over the spilled powder to prevent further spread.
3. Leave the room where the package is, and close the door. Prevent anyone else from entering the room.
4. Dial 911 to report the incident.
5. Remove any clothing items contaminated with powder and place inside a plastic bag.
6. Wash your hands with soap and water to avoid spreading any potential contamination.
7. Keep all people who were in the room together until the police arrive. Avoid direct contact with any other persons to avoid spreading any potential contamination.

What Will Happen?

The police will respond and investigate any suspicious items reported. If people have been contaminated with powder, and no immediate determination can be made as to the nature of the powder, further decontamination may be undertaken (showering). The materials will be sent to the Ohio Department of Health for lab tests. Should the tests show the presence of anthrax, all persons who were potentially exposed will be contacted for further medical follow-up. It is important to remember that while anthrax is dangerous, prompt recognition and treatment are effective.

For Further Information – Contact the UC Police at 556-4900
www.uc.edu/pubsafety/