

# Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs)

## Definition

Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) are chemicals in solid or liquid state that easily become vapors or gases, including a variety of compounds that can cause short and long-term adverse health effects.

## Where does VOCs come from?

VOCs are found in petroleum products like gasoline, benzene and natural gas. They are also found in dry-cleaned clothing and common household products like paints, disinfectants, pesticides, glues, degreasers and air fresheners.

## How might I be exposed to VOCs?

They commonly enter the body through inhalation and through skin contact (touching products that contain VOCs). The main indoor sources of this chemical are tobacco smoke, stored fuels, paint supplies and automobile emissions in attached garages.

## Potential Health Effects

VOCs could cause eye and respiratory irritation, difficulty breathing, headaches, fatigue, nausea, memory impairment and skin problems. Higher concentrations may cause damage to the liver, kidney or brain. They have been associated with cancer in humans.

## How can I reduce the risk of exposure of VOCs?

- Stay indoors or limit outdoor activities on days with poor air quality. Certain filters and room air cleaners can help reduce indoor particle levels.
- Don't smoke inside and reduce the use of candles, wood-burning stoves and fireplaces.
- Increase ventilation when using products that emit VOCs.
- Wearing protective gear for eyes, mouth, and hands will minimize any inhalation and surface contact.



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