What is ricin?
Ricin is a very dangerous poison. It is made from a plant called castor.

What does ricin look like?
If terrorists made ricin into a poison, it would be:
• A mist or powder that you could breathe, or
• A powder that can be put in food or water.

If ricin is made into a mist, or put in food or water, you can’t see it or smell it.

Can I die if I get exposed to ricin?
Yes, you can die within hours. But, if you are alive after 3-5 days, you will probably recover.

What are the symptoms of ricin poisoning?
If you breathe ricin, the first symptoms are:
• difficulty breathing or tightness in the chest
• fever
• cough
• nausea

Then, you may have heavy sweating, fluid in your lungs, serious breathing problems, and your skin may turn blue. Finally, you stop breathing and die.

If you swallow ricin, the first symptoms are:
• vomiting
• diarrhea (sometimes with blood)
• hallucinations
• seizures (your body will shake)
• blood in your urine

Within several days, your liver, spleen and kidneys stop working, and you die.

If ricin touches your skin or eyes, they will turn red and you will feel pain.

What should I do if I think I was exposed to ricin?

Call 911.
Then, if you breathed or touched ricin, do these things quickly:

• Move away. If you were outdoors, leave that place. If you were indoors, go outside.
• Take off your outer layers of clothing. Don’t pull any clothes over your head – cut them off instead. Try not to touch the outside of your clothing. It may have ricin on it.
• Wash yourself. Use lots of soap and water. If your eyes are burning or blury, rinse them with plain water for 10 to 15 minutes.
• If you wear glasses, wash them with soap and water. You can wear them after you wash them. If you wear contacts, take them out and do not put them back in.
• Throw out your clothes. After you wash, use rubber gloves or put plastic bags on your hands to put the clothes you were wearing in a plastic bag. Also, put anything else that touched your clothing in the bag. If you wear contacts, put them in the bag, too.
• Seal the plastic bag. Then seal that bag inside another plastic bag. (Tell the emergency responders where you left the bag.)

If you swallowed ricin:
• Call 911.
• Do not eat or drink anything.
• Do not try to make yourself vomit.

For more information…
Call CDC for help in English or Spanish:
800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636)
888-232-6348 (TTY)

Or visit: www.cdc.gov/ricin
www.dhs.ca.gov/epo