Methanol poisoning 'Know the Symptoms' awareness poster

The Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) has developed a poster for travel clinics

There have been deaths and serious illnesses among British travellers linked to drinks containing methanol abroad.

Methanol is occasionally found in fake (counterfeit) imitations of well-known alcohol brands like vodka or illegal local spirits and 'bootleg alcohol'. Drinking methanol, even in very small amounts, is extremely dangerous.

This issue has attracted sustained media and parliamentary attention, driven in part by advocacy from survivors and the families and friends of those affected. There is a clear need to reach young travellers with potentially life-saving information. The FCDO has developed a methanol poisoning awareness poster for travel clinics. We hope you can support this campaign by displaying the poster in your clinics.

Methanol poisoning symptoms

At first, symptoms of methanol poisoning are similar to those of alcohol poisoning, including confusion, vomiting, dizziness and drowsiness or feeling tired. Because of this, symptoms could be mistaken for a normal hangover and may not be may not be recognised immediately.

Typically, people with methanol poisoning may not experience any further symptoms for up to 12-24 hours. After this, their condition worsens, and they start to experience symptoms including stomach pain, vertigo, rapid breathing, breathlessness, blurred vision, trouble looking at bright lights or even blindness, seizures or unconsciousness. If methanol poisoning is not treated it can lead to permanent blindness, organ failure or death.

How to obtain a copy of the poster

Harlow Printing Ltd will soon be including a copy of the poster with each order for additional International Certificates of Vaccination or Prophylaxis.

NaTHNaC staff will also be present at the Northern European Conference on Travel Medicine

(NECTM10) in Belfast on 3-5 June. If you are attending this event, please come and visit the NaTHNaC stand and pick up a copy of the poster. The poster is also available as a free download on the Travel Aware - Spiking and methanol poisoning campaign page.

About the poster

The poster lists key symptoms of methanol poisoning by body part and includes a QR code linking to the FCDO's Spiking and Methanol Poisoning guidance on the Travel Aware website.

Resources

- TravelHealthPro: Methanol poisoning
- FCDO: Spiking and methanol poisoning