

**SOME SAFETY TIPS FOR STREET ACTIONS/PROTESTS**

*With Some Specific Tips & Guidelines for Treating Exposure to Pepper-Spray (as of 5/30/2020)*

**About this tip sheet** - This was pulled together very fast after NYPD mass-pepper sprayed protesters at a George Floyd protest the evening of Friday May 29, 2020. It's compiled from a number of sources<sup>1</sup>. This is NOT meant as a comprehensive document – we pulled this together because many of our member groups may not have experience dealing with NYPD pepper-spraying and using teargas on protesters. This is a placeholder document to get info out to our members/partners quickly because we know some folks will continue to be out, NYPD is violently escalating against NYC anti-police brutality protests, and we're concerned for folks' safety.

Some general tips to consider before you go out:

- **Wear Comfortable, protective shoes** that you can run in
- **Wear clothing that can cover all your skin** to protect from chemical exposure; wear long sleeves
  - Bring fresh clothes in plastic bag (in case yours get contaminated)
  - Avoid use of oils & lotions because they can trap the chemicals and thereby prolong exposure.
- **Wear your mask/face covering** to help protect yourself and others since the COVID-19 pandemic is still a reality in our lives – especially in NYC.
  - Bring an extra mask/face covering that is clean and in a ziploc/other clean bag so that if cops pepper-spray you, you can replace the mask that was pepper-sprayed after using a wet bandana for a period of time. (see below re wet bandana)
- **In case NYPD uses tear gas or pepper-spray while you're out, some things to consider:**
  - **Carry water** and keep it readily available in an emergency. A bottle with a squirt cap is ideal for an eye flush.
  - **Bring tissues** in case you will need to blow your nose after being pepper-sprayed
  - Gas masks provide the best facial protection, if properly fitted and sealed; however, a **wet bandana** is a more accessible and a helpful protectant, as well.
    - Bandana should cover nose and mouth, be soaked in water, lemon juice or apple cider vinegar, this can aid in breathing during chemical exposure
    - **Bandanas soaked in a solution of 50% vinegar and 50% water** can make easy-to-carry mask(s) that provide effective emergency protection against chemical agents. Keep them sealed in a zip-lock plastic bag and take out when needed.
  - **Swim or Ski Goggles** to protect your eyes and disposable gloves in case you need to treat yourself or help treat others.

If you are pepper sprayed or tear-gassed in the streets

*Immediately:*

- **Cover your mouth and nose** and leave affected area if you can.
- **STAY CALM.** Panicking increases the irritation. Breathe slowly. Remember effects are temporary.
- **Do not touch or rub your eyes.**

- If eyes are irritated, **flush using water or saline/water mix to rinse**. Rinsing eyes with a 50 percent solution of liquid antacid and water called L.A.W. Use only aluminum hydroxide or magnesium hydroxide based antacids such as Maalox (only plain).
  - This works as a **mouth rinse** too, as long as the person is alert and breathing normally. Spit it out after rinsing.
  - A mist of L.A.W. can also soothe **affected skin areas**.
  - Other treatments, like milk, spoil when unrefrigerated and contain irritants such as sugar and preservatives.
- **Wearing contacts?** You must remove the lenses or get someone to remove them for you, with CLEAN, uncontaminated fingers. Destroy the lenses after exposure.
- Always irrigate from the inside corner of the eye towards the outside, with head tilted back and slightly towards the side being rinsed.
- **Try not to swallow.** Blow your nose, rinse your mouth, cough & spit.
- **Try not to touch exposed clothing.**
- **If skin is irritated,** use cold water with soap to wash.
- **If you use an inhaler,** you can use it to aid your breathing; however, try to use clean hands to touch your inhaler, if possible, or ask an unexposed comrade to help you so that you do not spread chemicals to your inhaler.

### Secondary Treatment

- Once in a safe place: **Seek medical treatment from street medic team, if available.**
  - If a street medic team is not available, get to a safe space with fresh air where unexposed comrades can help you, or at least help ensure your safety while you treat yourself.
- **Take off contaminated clothing;** separate them from other garments to avoid contamination.
- As soon as you get home/to destination, it is **essential to shower.** Use the coldest water you can to keep your pores from opening – and use soap. Pepper spray is oil-based and needs to be washed away with soap and water/things that will cut through the oil.
- Consider discarding your exposed clothing if possible. If not, **wash your clothes separate from other clothing, using strong detergents.** (Note some sources recommend discarding clothing only, as chemical residue can sometimes be left in the washing machines following a wash cycle – this is more of a serious issue with tear gas than pepper spray, but pepper sprayed clothes should be washed separately)
- **If the pain does not resolve to a tolerable level / begin to improve within 45 minutes to an hour after following secondary treatment steps,** you may need to seek advanced medical care (ie from an urgent care center or emergency room).

### If you see a pepper spray or tear gas attack coming:

- Try to remove yourself from the area, dispersing into a wide area, running upwind of the mist. This can include ducking and rolling away.

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<sup>i</sup> This tip sheet is compiled from/informed by sources including:

- Amnesty International: "Safety During Protests": [https://www.amnestyusa.org/pdfs/SafetyDuringProtest\\_F.pdf](https://www.amnestyusa.org/pdfs/SafetyDuringProtest_F.pdf) and "The Right to Protest" Resource Packet [https://www.amnestyusa.org/files/pdfs/protestresourcepacket\\_web.pdf](https://www.amnestyusa.org/files/pdfs/protestresourcepacket_web.pdf)
- Hong Kong protest art / Volunteer Fire Department (Protest resource): [https://twitter.com/uwu\\_uwu\\_mo/status/1187573191964844035](https://twitter.com/uwu_uwu_mo/status/1187573191964844035)
- Red Power Media – Indigenous Issues & Resistance, "Activist Defense Tactics Against Police Pepper Spray Attacks": <https://redpowermedia.wordpress.com/2014/02/02/activist-defense-tactics-against-police-pepper-spray-attacks/>
- FrontLine Wellness United: <https://www.frontlinewellness.org/guidelines-for-treating-pepperspraychemical-irritants>