

Fight the Power

/ Do No Harm

**a guide to caring for yourself
& others during actions**



what to expect

& watch for

demo prep

clothing & equipment

Treatments

Pepper spray & tear gas

blunt trauma & bleeding

This 'zine is meant as a general guide for preventing & recovering from injuries as a result of exercising your right to freedom of speech & assembly. It is meant to empower YOU, but always inform people of your experience level before helping them. Also, no one can guarantee your safety, ever; if you're seriously afraid of arrest or injury you might be better off staying home, wrapping yourself in a soft blanket and watching t.v. while pretending that everything is cool.

TORONTO AREA COLLECTIVE OF STREET MEDICS

THE TAC MEDIC TEAM IS A TORONTO BASED COLLECTIVE OF STREET MEDICS THAT PROVIDE MEDICAL SUPPORT DURING ACTIONS, BASIC MEDICAL TRAINING FOR ACTIVISTS AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH TRAINING.

WE ARE A CONSENSUS BASED NON-VIOLENT AND NON-OPPRESSIVE GROUP OF INDIVIDUALS WHO BELIEVE IN PROVIDING UNIVERSAL AND CONFIDENTIAL FRONT LINE EMERGENCY TREATMENT DURING DEMONSTRATIONS.



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1st thing's 1st

[know what you are or could be getting in to]

is it a picket? a rally? a march or blockade?

What you're walking in to will affect how you prep and what you should bring.

[Consider having an affinity group]

an affinity group is a group of people with common goals at an action. they can be strangers or friends. if you're all close, safely exchange emergency info such as meds/medical requirements, legal info etc. develop an exit plan/rendezvous point.

If you have a group, stick with them!

[keep an eye on your situation]

keep an eye on any police for indications of what might come next.

if the yellowjackets all disappear it might mean they're regrouping OR riot police are coming in (or it might just mean shift change!). if police are putting on gas

masks there's a good chance you're about to face **chemical** weapons.

at the same time you're surveilling the police keep tabs on what's happening in the crowd around you.

If windows are being smashed decide if that's where you want to be.

[act on fact]

fear is a **weapon** of the police

fight it with **truth**

don't panic. stay calm. confirm rumours.

*D*emo

Action Fashion

*comfy shoes you can run in
boots are protective, but can be hard to run in
it's NOT the day to try out your new shoes!*

*cover as much of your skin as possible
(without risking heat stroke!)
to hide tattoos, scars & protect skin from chemical weapons or paints*

*heavy, heat-resistant gloves
if you're thinking of handling tear gas canisters*

*consider the weather & duration of the action you'll be taking part in.
dressing in layers gives you flexibility in warmth & appearance*

Equip.

shatter resistant eye protection like sunglasses, swim goggles
[rubber lined works better than foam]

bandana or scarf soaked in H₂O, lemon juice or cider vinegar
*to help you breathe in the midst of pepper spray or tear gas
[wear an untreated scarf against your skin to help cut potency of breathing vinegar]*

any meds or inhalers you might need, sealed in a plastic bag
[a pepper sprayed inhaler is useless during an asthma attack!]

water
*snacks if desired, but definitely water! sport bottles are the best
[to drink, as a wound rinse or emergency eyewash]*

*R*ep...

What Not to Wear [or do]

*contact lenses - don't wear. 'em.
they can trap pepper spray & tear gas particles causing permanent damage or even
blindness*

*skip the beauty regimen
oil based moisturizers, sunscreens, perfumes or makeup will trap chemical irritants
against your skin, causing more pain and possibly chemical burns*

*fleece is faux-pas
try to avoid fleece & other fuzzy fabrics - they trap chemical sprays*

*check the mirror – ixnay the danglies!
no, no. your earrings! Take out any piercings that can be grabbed or ripped out –
accidentally or on purpose. Don't wear anything too loose & if you wear a scarf to
cover your hair [or your face] ensure there isn't excess hanging that can be grabbed.*

so you got pepper sprayed...

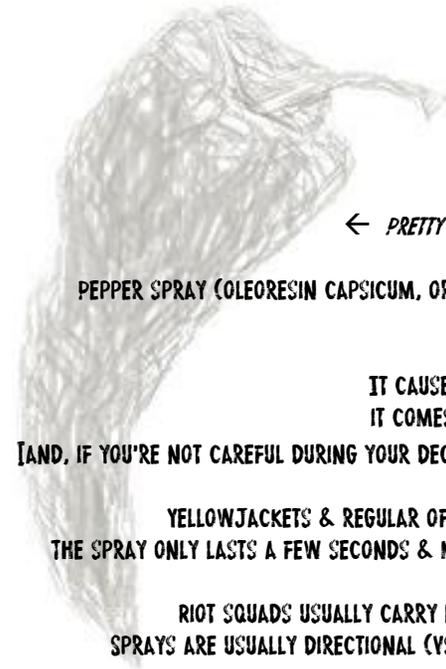
The first thing to hit you is the smell. Harsh. Chemical. Overpowering.. Soon the pain starts. Everywhere. Face, neck, ears and eyes – all burning. You don't scream because you can't - you're struggling to inhale. You can't seem to draw air. Like you're underwater even though you aren't. Around you people screaming. Yelling. And moving. Running. The panic. It sets heavy into your stomach. Your chest. You thrust your arms out, trying to guide yourself away with them. Trying to follow the disembodied voices while wondering about your friends. Are they okay? Your hand hits something. Plastic. It pushes back. Violently. Confused you fall backwards, hard onto your ass – the wind further taken out of you. It takes a moment before you realize it must have been a riot shield. You can't see, you can't breathe, and you're surrounded by police.

stay calm.

If you got a good dose it's going to hurt - you're not going to be able to see and breathing will be a chore, but panicking will only make it worse. Stop and think. You CAN breathe, and the pain is only temporary! Spit if it got in your mouth. Blow your nose – on the street, on your shirt, a handkerchief – wherever – just do it, it helps! Yell for a medic. Let your eyes tear but DON'T rub them – even though you'll desperately want to. If you can't see, don't wander too far – you might trip [or walk into a police line!]. If a medic or comrade still hasn't reached you try finding your water bottle and giving yourself an eye wash. Tilt your head back and to the same side as the eye you'll be rinsing. Keep your mouth closed! If your eyes are swollen shut try to pry them open with your thumb & forefinger or by pinching the skin under your eye and pulling it downwards. Pour in a stream of water, stop and blink.

Repeat – several times on both eyes.

It will get better!



WHAT IT IS

[HINT: IT'S NOT A FOOD ADDITIVE!]

← **PRETTY MUCH THAT. MIXED WITH SOLVENTS & CHEMICALS. YUM**

PEPPER SPRAY (OLEORESIN CAPSICUM, OR "OC SPRAY") IS A CHEMICAL COMPOUND USED FOR CROWD CONTROL & DISPERSAL BY POLICE [AND SOMETIMES PRIVATE SECURITY]

IT CAUSES THE INFLAMMATION OF ANY MUCOUS MEMBRANES IT COMES INTO CONTACT WITH – EYES, NOSE, MOUTH, LUNGS [AND, IF YOU'RE NOT CAREFUL DURING YOUR DECONTAMINATION SHOWER, MORE SENSITIVE AREAS...]

YELLOWJACKETS & REGULAR OFFICERS WEAR SMALL CANISTERS ON THEIR HIP BELTS THE SPRAY ONLY LASTS A FEW SECONDS & MAY NOT BE AS POTENT AS WHAT RIOT POLICE CARRY [DIFFERS PLACE TO PLACE]

RIOT SQUADS USUALLY CARRY LARGER CANISTERS THAT LAST FOR UP TO 8 SECONDS SPRAYS ARE USUALLY DIRECTIONAL (VS. WEDGE/DIFFUSE) SO POLICE CAN OFTEN USE THEM WITHOUT PROTECTIVE GEAR

IF YOU TAKE A DIRECT HIT YOU CAN EXPECT YOUR EYES TO TEAR UP AND SWELL SHUT. YOU WILL BE IN PAIN, AND TEMPORARILY BLIND. YOU'LL PROBABLY COUGH & CHOKE

**IT MAY FEEL LIKE YOU CAN'T BREATHE [BUT YOU CAN, SO TRY NOT TO PANIC!]
YOU WILL FEEL BURNING ON ANY EXPOSED SKIN.
UNSIGHTLY SNOT WILL DRIBBLE FROM YOUR NOSE**

**BASICALLY IT SUCKS [BUT REMEMBER IT'S ONLY TEMPORARY]
THE WORST USUALLY SUBSIDES AFTER ABOUT 20 MINUTES
AFTER TWO HOURS MOST OF IT WILL BE RESOLVED [DECON SHOWER ASIDE]
YOUR EYES MIGHT FEEL DRY & SCRATCHY FOR A DAY
AND YOU MIGHT GET THE OCCASIONAL BURNING PATCH OF SKIN FOR A DAY OR TWO AFTER [ESPECIALLY IF YOUR SKIN GETS WET]
BUT WE HAVE FAITH IN YOU**

YOU CAN MAKE IT THROUGH — YOU ARE STRONG!

using the LAW mixture...

the LAW mixture is a 50/50 mix of liquid antacid & water. activists have been using it – from Toronto to Bahrain - for years to try and counter the effects of both pepper spray (OC) & tear gas (CS).

[use either magnesium or aluminum hydroxide]

Does it work?

The overwhelming majority of people and “literature” claim yes or, at worst, that you get the same results as water when used in your eyes. While that’s all pretty subjective one formal study did find it to be effective in neutralizing OC spray on exposed skin.

[We’ve treated people who wanted nothing to do with it, and others who’ve demanded nothing but!]

So should you use it, or have it used on you?

That’s totally up to you! It’s something you should decide before actually being sprayed, however! Consider your beliefs, allergies and alternatives. If you’re thinking of using it on someone else, always ensure it’s okay!

So how do you use LAW?

Liquid antacids are a liquid suspension – there are fine particles in it which then get put into your eyes. It’s important to rinse these out, or they’ll irritate your eyes even more *[definitely not what you’ll want!]*.

Put a few drops or a short stream of LAW into the eye you’re treating. Blink a couple times to disperse and then rinse with saline or water [saline is nicer on the eyes!]

Repeat!

decon- tamination

if you’ve been pepper sprayed or tear gassed consider yourself **contaminated!**

everywhere you go a *chem trail* will follow!
If you plan on taking a train, bus or subway consider your fellow passengers!

it will be on your clothes, in your hair and on anything you’re carrying.
it will spread from your face to your hands to that rail to that other person’s hand to their face soon you’ll be responsible for **pepper-smearing** some lady that rode the same bus as you!

So how do you deal when you’re ready to go home?

carrying a change of clothes in a sealed bag is one option if you’re wearing layers. *consider taking off the outside layer.* get a bag from a grocery to seal the most offending clothes in. wash your hands act sheepish & apologize to your closest busmates. **[even if you’re a little proud!]**

when you get home **it’s time to strip!**

in the hallway or backyard if you’re really adventurous [and have very understanding neighbours or roomies!]

wash your clothes asap with the *harshes*t detergent you can find take a shower [trust us, you stink!] but heed this warning: it’s going to *hurt* - the water will reactivate the pepper spray you’ll probably *choke* and *cough*

maybe *cry* or *heave*

but it’s gotta be done!

make the water **as cool as you can** stand [this prevents the pores from opening up]

remember - the water that hits your skin is then *also* contaminated!
be *methodical*: head to toe

keep your eyes & mouth shut while washing your hair and face try and keep contaminated water from hitting your more...*sensitive* areas you’ll probably need to shampoo a couple times

don’t scrub your skin – use a soft cloth or your hands

afterwards **drink lots of water.** *be nice to yourself & your body*

mentally prepare yourself to fight again another day

You've linked arms with the people on either side of you. Together, with others, you form a privacy circle. Inside a team of medics are performing their magic on a fellow protestor. Not too far away a line of riot cops stand at the ready; plexiglas shields reflecting the streetlights. An officer steps forward through the line, ARWEN in hand. With a plume of smoke a canister clinks across the asphalt, finally coming to rest in front of you.

What It Is: Probably **CS Gas (Tear Gas)**

[an aerosolized particulate]

What it Does: reacts with moisture on your skin or in mucous membranes to cause discomfort, tearing/stinging, runny nose, coughing. It might also cause burns/blisters on the skin, vomiting, disorientation and difficulty breathing.

Other Info: CS gas has been linked to miscarriages, chromosomal changes and, at high doses, even death.

What to Do: Try to move upwind. If you're inside, get outside.
Remove contact lenses ASAP!

Decontamination

use an alkaline solution on skin
[i.e. LAW or baking soda/water mix]
for your eyes, use a LAW & saline regimen
[as you would do for pepper spray]
if that's not available plain water will help
take a cool/lukewarm shower when you get home
you may have to wash your clothes several times

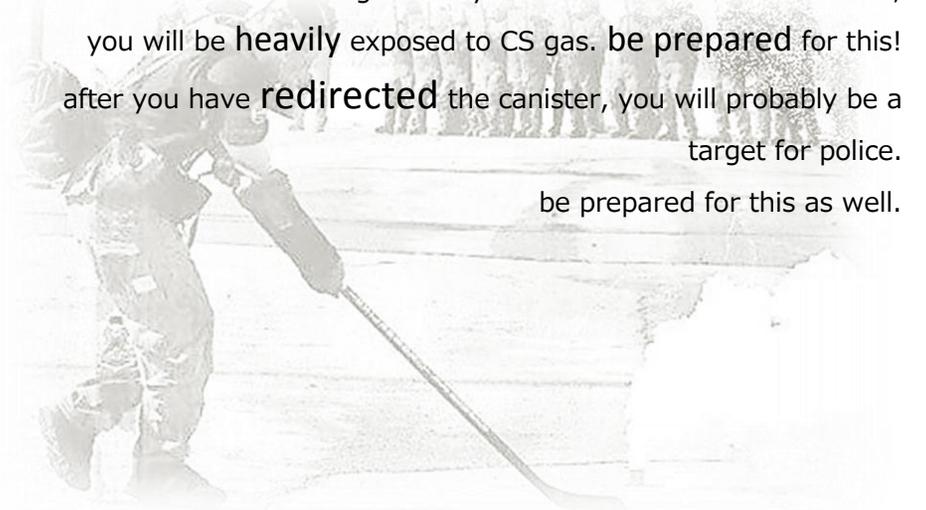
a moment passes in shocked silence. everyone is frozen. the canister begins spewing a cloud of white, acrid smoke.

*[while the TAC team does not necessarily condone playing around with **NOXIOUS** substances we do believe in freedom of choice and personal responsibility*

here is what you should know if you are going to go anywhere near a tear gas canister]

tear gas canisters will be **hot**. very hot.
ensure you have the proper protection;
thick leather / heat resistant gloves will work
[so do hockey sticks!]

don't touch it before it starts emitting the tear gas - this may seem counterintuitive, but the movement of you grabbing it might cause the canister to **explode** in your hand.
in the few seconds in might take you to kick or throw the canister, you will be **heavily** exposed to CS gas. **be prepared** for this!
after you have **redirected** the canister, you will probably be a target for police.
be prepared for this as well.



*in a moment of panic you grab the CS canister and throw it... with bare hands.
oops.*

Burn Treatment

Identifying a burn/cheat-sheet
Red/sore – 1st degree
Clear blisters – 2nd degree superficial
Cloudy blisters – 2nd degree deep
dry/brown/leathery – 3rd degree

the first step in treating ANY burn is to **remove the source of the burn**
if it's a chemical powder brush it off
if it's a thermal burn remove yourself from the heat/extinguish flames etc.

next you want to **cool the burn** to stop it from progressing
thoroughly flush chemicals off the skin or from eyes
run thermal burns under cool, running water

lastly, **assess & dress** your burn
if you have a serious burn over a large or important area (face, hands) seek medical care
cover 1st or 2nd degree burns loosely with dry, sterile gauze
cover 3rd degree burns loosely with wet, sterile gauze

DON'T

use ointments, oils or raw eggs on fresh burns
[they can trap the heat & worsen the burn, or cause infection]

use ice on a burn
[it will cause more damage to the skin cells]

ever use vinegar to rinse eyes from pepper spray
[ever! No matter what anyone tells you!]

pop blisters
even if they're annoying!
[it is your body's healing process;
breaking the skin risks infection of the burn]

You force your legs to move towards the chaos. Towards the person now slumped against a wall. You ask if they're okay. Their voice comes out warbled. Nonsensical. Their eyes are unseeing and unfocused, blood streaming down their face from a head wound.

Call for a medic & get someone to call 911

This person has a **[head injury]**

They need medical help right away.

What you can do.

Minimize movement of their head, neck & spine.

They could have a cervical spine injury from the impact to their head.

If they are lying down stabilizing their head will minimize movement BUT
ALWAYS ask for permission & explain what you are doing first!

Keep talking to them in a **calm** manner.

They might not be making sense, but there's a chance they can understand you.

Keep them warm.

Watch them closely for changes to their level of consciousness, awareness, breathing, pulse etc. **Make notes of these**, if you can, and let the street medics or paramedics (whoever reaches you first) know.

Notes

The scalp & facial areas have **a lot** of blood vessels.

bleeding from these areas tend to look horribly devastating, but **don't panic**.

That said, you should still **protect yourself** from coming into contact with someone else's blood. If you choose to provide care without the proper protection do so knowing that blood can pass on a variety of infections such as hepatitis or HIV if the person you are caring for is infected.

Bleeding, Bruising & Otherwise

Not everyone can stand the sight of blood, but if you can & someone needs your help here are the basics.

minor to moderate bleeding will stop with direct pressure & time

and are more of an infection risk than a threat to life

clean/flush the wound with saline or soapy water [be sure to rinse!]

apply a sterile dressing & direct pressure with the palm of your hand. If it bleeds through the dressing, apply another dressing on top. Once the bleeding has stopped bandage/secure the dressing as is with medical tape or a roller bandage.

SERIOUS BLEEDING IS AN EMERGENCY

losing too much blood can cause irreversible shock & death.

it can be identified by colour (bright red), amount (lots!) & will be spurting

the most important thing to do in this case is to

stop the bleeding

have the person sit & cease movement

get someone to call an ambulance

apply immediate & firm pressure [preferably with a gloved hand]

if the injury is on a limb, raise it above the heart

if you know where the applicable pressure point is, use it

don't tourniquet unless you are directed to by an operator

or it is an extreme life-saving emergency

this is not tv

whatever limb you tourniquet, they will likely lose

there are also other safety risks

and legal risk to yourself

aftercare

consider whether a tetanus shot or stitches are required
change the dressing about once a day & keep an eye out for infection

[redness, pus, heat, odour]

don't overuse antibiotic ointments

[they can interfere with scab formation]

bruising

is bleeding caught underneath the skin
while most is minor, extensive bruising can sometimes indicate a serious injury

if you've sustained any direct trauma you can expect some bruising

if the trauma was serious [i.e. a baton strike]

you can expect deep bruising that expands past the injury borders

as well as pain & swelling

treat with RICE

[Rest, Ice, Compression, Elevation]

taking an NSAID like ibuprofen may help reduce pain & swelling

but read the labels & warnings before taking anything!

strains & sprains

is an injury to a ligament, muscle or tendon

RICE is the first-line treatment

for all of them

again, using an NSAID may help discomfort & swelling

[again - check the labels!]

if pain is extreme, or doesn't improve after a few days

medical attention should be sought

HOW YOU CAN HELP OUR STREET MEDICS @ AN ACTION

COME PREPARED

[MENTALLY & PHYSICALLY!]

BRING YOUR OWN WATER, SNACKS, OIL-FREE SUNSCREEN ETC.

DON'T FORGET TO REMEMBER

PRE-EXISTING MEDICAL CONDITIONS

STOP & REST IF YOU NEED IT

SNACK IF YOU WANT TO

BRING ANY MEDICATIONS/INHALERS IN A SEALED PLASTIC BAG

PHOTOS/VIDEO

IF YOU INTEND TO TAKE PHOTOS OR VIDEO OF OUR MEDICS
IN ACTION OR OTHERWISE - PLEASE ASK BEFOREHAND!

RESPECT PRIVACY & CONFIDENTIALITY

OF THE TEAM & THOSE WE PROVIDE SUPPORT TO

OFFER HELP

THERE'S USUALLY SOMETHING YOU CAN DO!

GET TRAINING

EITHER BASIC ACTIVIST TRAINING [OFFERED A FEW TIMES/YEAR]
OR JOIN THE TEAM [IF YOU CAN COMMIT YOUR TIME & EFFORT!]

PRIVACY CIRCLES

IN SITUATIONS WHERE THERE ARE LOTS OF ONLOOKERS OR MEDIA OUR
MEDICS MAY ASK INDIVIDUALS TO FORM A PRIVACY CIRCLE.
THIS CAN BE DONE SIMPLY BY LINKING ARMS AND ENCIRCLING THE AREA
OUR MEDICS ARE WORKING WHILE FACING OUTWARDS.
THE TECHNIQUE IS USEFUL FOR PROVIDING PRIVACY TO INDIVIDUALS
BEING TREATED, GIVING MEDICS ROOM TO FUNCTION
PREVENTING MEDIA FROM INTERFERING
AND ALSO PROVIDING A SENSE OF SECURITY TO OUR MEDICS



IF YOU CAN'T COMMIT YOUR TIME BUT WOULD LIKE HELP BY DONATING
SUPPLIES OR FINANCIALLY PLEASE CONTACT
TACSTREETMEDICS@GMAIL.COM