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# Propylene Oxide

National Cancer Institute

## Source

National Cancer Institute. *Propylene Oxide*. NCI Thesaurus. Code C44438.

A synthetic, highly-flammable, volatile, colorless liquid that is soluble in water and miscible with many organic solvents. Propylene oxide is used primarily as a chemical intermediate in the production of polyethers and propylene glycol. It is also used as a pesticide and a fumigant for the sterilization of packaged foods and plastic medical instruments. Acute inhalation exposure to vapors of this compound can result in respiratory tract irritation, coughing, difficulty in breathing (dyspnea) and buildup of fluid in the lungs (pulmonary edema) that can possibly lead to pneumonia. Inhale high concentrations of the vapors for short time periods may cause headache, motor weakness, incoordination, ataxia and coma. Contact with propylene oxide can irritate the eyes and skin. It is reasonably anticipated to be a human carcinogen. (NCI05)