

Pepper Spray And How to Use It



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|----|
| CHAPTER ONE - What is Pepper Defense Spray?..... | 5 |
| The Effects of Pepper Spray..... | 7 |
| Special Considerations..... | 9 |
| Being a Good Witness..... | 10 |
| CHAPTER TWO - Preparing to Defend Yourself..... | 12 |
| Can You Injure Someone Else?..... | 13 |
| Fight or Flight..... | 16 |
| CHAPTER THREE - Choosing a Defense Spray..... | 18 |
| Differences by Brand..... | 21 |
| Differences in Delivery (Stream, Spray, etc)..... | 25 |
| CHAPTER FOUR - Use of a Defense Spray..... | 30 |
| How to carry it..... | 30 |
| How to spray it (Target acquisition)..... | 32 |
| Use in the Car..... | 33 |
| Use in the Home or other Indoor Area..... | 34 |
| CHAPTER FIVE – Post Assault Considerations..... | 35 |
| Feelings of Regret..... | 35 |
| Feelings of Invincibility | 36 |
| CHAPTER SIX – Home Made Pepper Spray..... | 38 |
| Ingredients and Supplies..... | 38 |
| Instructions..... | 39 |

CHAPTER ONE

What is Pepper Defense Spray?



Pepper spray, also known as OC spray (from "Oleoresin Capsicum"), OC gas, and capsicum spray, is a lachrymatory agent (a chemical compound that irritates the eyes to cause tears, pain, and even temporary blindness) that is used in riot control, crowd control, and personal self-defense, including defense against dogs and bears.

They can be water or oil based. The best formula being oil based as oil based products do not have the problem of separation. Separation is where the final blend will not stay blended and the oil (OC) will separate from the water base. This is very similar to putting oil in water. The oil will want to rise to the top.

It is a less lethal agent that may be deadly in rare cases. The active ingredient in pepper spray is **capsaicin**, which is a chemical derived from the fruit of plants in the *Capsicum* genus, including chilies. Long-term effects of pepper spray have not been effectively researched.

Extraction of oleoresin capsicum from peppers involves finely ground capsicum, from which capsaicin is extracted in an organic solvent such as ethanol. The solvent is then evaporated, and the remaining wax-like resin is the oleoresin capsicum. An emulsifier such as propylene glycol is used to suspend the OC in water, and pressurized to make it aerosol in pepper spray.

The high performance liquid chromatography (HPLC) method is used to measure the amount of capsaicin within pepper sprays. This derives the “percentage” of pepper sprays. Scoville Heat Units (SHU) are used to measure the concentration or "heat" of pepper spray. This is the true indicator of how effective your pepper spray will be.

Oleoresin capsicum also is used in foods where the flavor and piquancy are desired without visible pepper specks, or to standardize the Scoville units.

A synthetic analogue of capsaicin, pelargonic acid vanillylamide (desmethyldihydrocapsaicin), is used in another version of pepper spray known as PAVA spray which is used in England. Another synthetic counterpart of pepper spray, pelargonic acid morpholide, was developed and is widely used in Russia.

Pepper spray typically comes in canisters, which are often small enough to be carried or concealed in a pocket or purse. Pepper spray can also be bought concealed in items such as rings and pagers. There are also pepper spray projectiles available, which can be fired from a paintball gun. It has been used for years against demonstrators.

The spray has commonly been revered as an alternative to extreme force, such as using bullets or batons. Once the skin interacts with the agent, the effects are usually similar in most cases.

The Effects of Pepper Spray

Pepper spray is an *inflammatory* chemical that reacts with the mucus membrane and enters the pores of the skin. It causes immediate closing of the eyes, difficulty breathing, runny nose, and coughing. The duration of its effects depends on the strength of the spray but the average full effect lasts around thirty to forty-five minutes, with diminished effects lasting for hours.

Repeated exposure can result in long-lasting changes in corneal sensitivity. There are no lasting decreases in visual acuity, but temporary blindness which last from 15-30 minutes, a burning sensation of the skin, upper body spasms which force a person to bend forward and uncontrollable coughing making it difficult to breathe or speak for between 3 to 15 minutes.

For those with asthma, taking other drugs, or subject to restraining techniques, which restrict the breathing passages, there is a risk of death. The Los Angeles Times has reported at least 61 deaths associated with police use of pepper spray since 1990 in the USA, and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) documented 27 deaths in custody of people sprayed with pepper spray in California alone, since 1993.

The US Army concluded in a 1993 study that pepper spray could cause "Mutagenic effects, carcinogenic effects, sensitization, cardiovascular and pulmonary toxicity, neurotoxicity, as well as possible human fatalities. There is a risk in using this product on a large and varied population".

However, the pepper spray was widely approved in the US despite the reservations of the US military scientists after it passed FBI tests in 1991. As of 1999, it was in use by more than 2000 public safety agencies.

Like TASERS, pepper spray has been associated with positional asphyxiation of individuals in police custody. There is much debate over the actual "cause" of death in these cases. There have been few controlled clinical studies of the human health effects of pepper spray marketed for police use, and those studies are contradictory. Some studies have found no harmful effects beyond the effects described above.

Direct close-range spray can cause more serious eye irritation by impacting the cornea with a concentrated stream of liquid (the so-called "hydraulic needle" effect). Some brands have addressed this problem by an elliptically cone shaped spray pattern.

Special Considerations

Even employing this spray could cause potential dangers to oneself. The spray could be misdirected by wind or "bounce" off of the targeted subject and land on sensitive areas of the skin and eyes. Precautionary measures should be applied to ensure that none of the chemicals disable your ability to control the target.

Never thrust your spraying hand out in front of you towards the assailant or animal. He/she/it may react quickly and hit your hand aside or grab it! As you spray, back up and continue backing up away from the assailant. This gives you a little more time and draws the assailant into the pepper spray

Shouting, "STOP" creates a slight diversion. Raising your non-spraying arm outstretched toward the assailant may cause his immediate attention to be focused on that hand, not the one with the pepper spray. This gives you time to spray before the assailant can react.

Don't ever shut your eyes! You may have to correct your aim, even if ever so slightly. You should hold the spray for 2 to 3 seconds, neither a short squirt nor a long drenching. After spraying your pepper spray, the assailant or animal will normally stop within seconds, blinded and virtually helpless due to uncontrollable coughing spasms. Once the assailant is disabled, stop spraying. Continue backing away and concentrate on looking for an avenue to get away.

There's much more to using pepper spray than point and spray! Remember, don't raise, point, and shoot the spray until you're ready to fire. Wait until the assailant or animal is in range and you know the spray will hit him full in the face area and effectively incapacitate him! The objective is to surprise your attacker, before they have a chance to react or think.

Obviously you may not have time to deploy your pepper spray in a textbook way. You may not have time to do anything but bring the spray up and start shooting. If that's the case, don't worry about aiming correctly, or even correcting your aim, **JUST POINT AND SHOOT!**

Being a Good Witness

A good witness is someone who remembers the details, such as the height, weight, hair color and style, and clothing of a suspect. If a vehicle were involved, a good witness would remember a license plate, color, make, model, and any other identifying marks.

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