

An Acid Attack, also known as vitriolage, is a violent form of assault with the intent to disfigure, maim, torture or kill the victim. The usual perpetrators of such crimes are husbands or rejected suitors in most cases, but they are not exclusive to such acts. If you are ever a victim of Acid Attack, act quickly to protect yourself and/or minimize the damage.

What To Do Immediately After An Attack

1. **Wash the affected area with water.** Keep pouring water for 20 to 30 minutes on the area affected to make sure all the acid is washed off. Wash with very cool water until the burning sensation starts to fade. *Do not* rinse the burn area with dirty water, as that can cause major infections.
2. **Remove everything which came in contact with acid.** From clothes to jewelry, remove everything which came in contact with the acid.
3. *Do not* apply any kind of cream or ointment on the affected area, as it may slow treatment procedure by the doctors.
4. **Rush to your nearest burn centre/hospital.** If you can, wrap the affected area(s) with sterilized gauze. This will protect the affected area from dirt, dust and contamination. Make sure the hospital in question has isolated wards for burn patients.
5. **Write down everything.** Write down everything you remember, *including* a description of your assailant(s). You might find it difficult to recount the event, but it is important to give all the details.
6. **Contact the police.** If you do decide to press charges – and you should – get a close friend or someone you can trust to accompany you to the police station to file a First Information Report (FIR). If you yourself cannot leave the hospital immediately, get a trusted person to contact the police for you. It is a good idea to talk to them right away, when events are still fresh in your mind. Try and remember the date, time, place and circumstances of the attack. If you recognize the assailant, notify the police about their name and your relationship with them. You can also contact any of the various NGOs working to help acid attack victims, such as Acid Survivors Pakistan.
7. **Talk to someone.** It is vital that you talk about your ordeal, whether with a close friend or a psychological counselor. It is extremely important to have a support system around you in order to get through this difficult time. If you can find no one to turn to, you can always contact a shelter or crisis center, like Acid Survivors Pakistan.

Follow-up Care

While immediate medical attention is necessary after an acid attack, the follow up care is equally important if one is to ensure the health of the survivor. Hygiene, proper dressing, physiotherapy, protein rich food in the diet and regular hemoglobin checks are all important aspects of treating an acid attack survivor after the initial medical attention has been provided.

Further long term care includes skin grafting and corrective surgery. Social reintegration is a major part of the healing process, whereby the survivor must be accepted back into society. It takes a lot of bravery on the part of the acid attack survivor along with a strong support system, in order to try and live life normally once more.

Most times vocational training is required, as an acid attack will severely diminish the victim's economic choices. Several shelters working for (and with) acid attack survivors also provide assistance in rehabilitation, education and careers.

It is important to keep in mind that when a person is attacked by acid, he or she must not only hide their face in our prejudiced society, but must also put a stop to their ambitions and lifelong dreams. However, with constant support in the form of friends and family, medico legal advice, counseling and physiotherapy, it is very possible to reach for those dreams once more.

Remember: *don't blame and shame the victim.* Blame and shame the perpetrator.