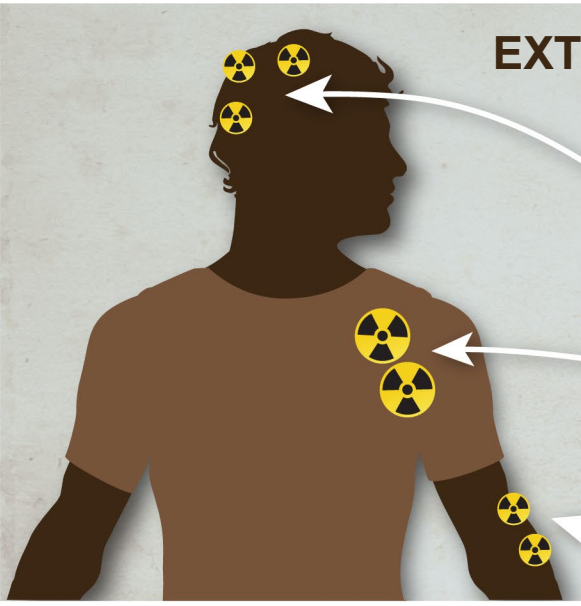
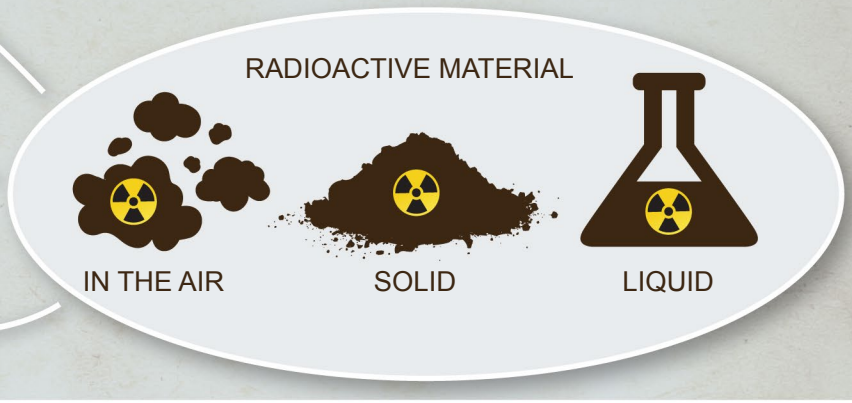
RADIATION CONTAMINATION VERSUS EXPOSURE

EXTERNAL CONTAMINATION

External contamination occurs when radioactive material comes into contact with a person's skin, hair, or clothing.



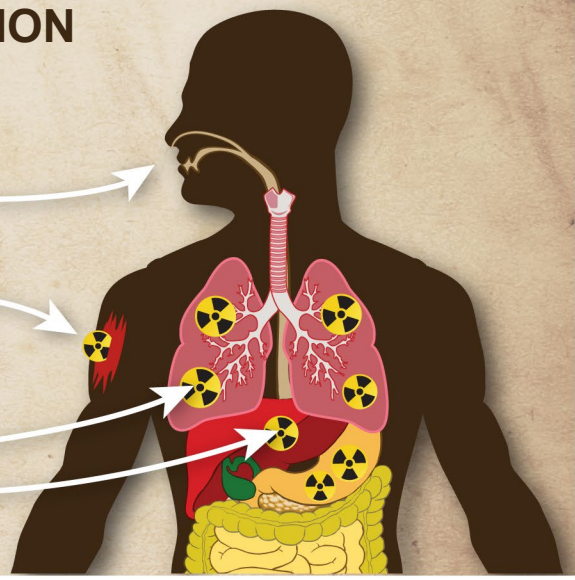


INTERNAL CONTAMINATION

Internal contamination can occur when radioactive material is swallowed or breathed in.

Internal contamination can also occur when radioactive material enters the body through an open wound.

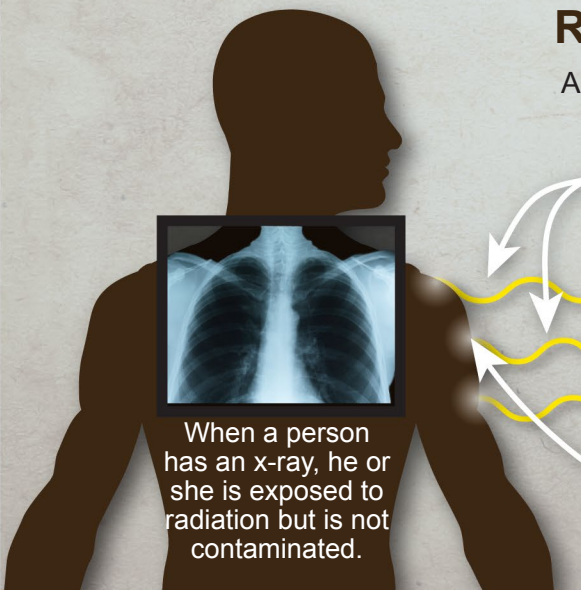
Different radioactive materials can accumulate in different body organs.



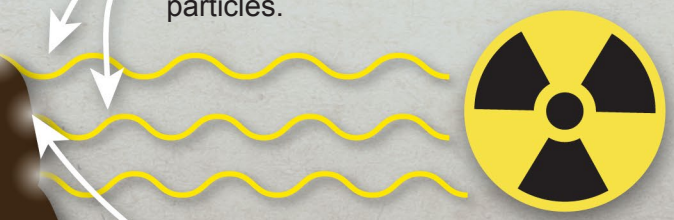
RADIATION EXPOSURE

Another word for radiation exposure is irradiation.

Radioactive materials give off a form of energy that travels in waves or particles.



When a person has an x-ray, he or she is exposed to radiation but is not contaminated.



When a person is exposed to certain types of radiation, the energy may penetrate the body.

A person exposed to radiation is not necessarily contaminated with radioactive material.

For a person to be contaminated, radioactive material must be on or inside of his or her body.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
http://emergency.cdc.gov/radiation