



# Pepper Spray Aftercare

*After exposure to pepper spray—whether directly, carried by wind, or it rubbed off on you—there are some crucial steps for after initial decontamination, when you leave the action:*

- ✓ **Change all contaminated clothes.** Even small doses of OC spray will affect all who encounter it. If possible, remove all contaminated items before going indoors, entering vehicles, or taking public transport. Ideally, dispose of contaminated items. If this is impossible, seal them in a plastic bag, keep away from people/animals, wash several times in pure/castile soap—not regular laundry detergent—and air dry. OC spray is very difficult, and sometimes impossible to wash out.
- ✓ **Take a cold shower as soon as possible.** Wash your body with strong dishwashing liquid—not soap/shampoo. Rinse each limb individually, as well as your head and hair. Repeat as many times as necessary. Make sure water drains away from your body—don't let contaminated water keep touching you!
- ✓ **Re-hydrate, and eat well over the coming days and weeks.**
- ✓ **Debrief with comrades and friends.** OC spray is chemical warfare, and the psychological effects must not be underestimated. Anxiety, stress, and trauma are common after exposure. Tap into your support networks and be gentle with yourself.

*Your eyes have experienced damage that may make them less sensitive for up to a week. **Do not rub your eyes** as you may do damage without feeling it. You may experience dry eyes. Eye drops may help.*

## RED FLAGS

If you experience any of the following symptoms over 24 hours after exposure, seek professional medical care **immediately**:

- ✚ **Continued difficult or painful breathing**
- ✚ **Coughing up coloured (often red/pink) substances**
- ✚ **Continued rapid or abnormal heart rate**

## Have you been treated by the Naarm Frontline Medics Collective?

If yes, you can send us an email at [naarmfrontlinemedics@skiff.com](mailto:naarmfrontlinemedics@skiff.com) to let us know:

- ✚ How you're going generally; ✚ If you have any ongoing symptoms (physical or emotional) ✚ If you've engaged professional care (e.g. hospital or GP treatment)
- ✚ If you need any advice or referrals to further support from NFM.

**Please note:** we are volunteers with first aid training, not medical professionals. Remember, street medicine does not necessarily stop once the action is over! Many people experience mental and emotional distress following a protest, especially if they have needed treatment for injuries. NFM tries to support people to the best of our abilities, but it's important to look after yourself and your comrades in the next few days—seek medical care if needed, stay hydrated, eat well, and get plenty of rest.



# OC Spray Legal Info

## If you are OC sprayed or assaulted by police at a protest:

- Take a photo of your injuries, or ask someone to, as soon as possible.
- See a doctor to have your injuries documented and treated.
- When you are safe, write down everything you can recall. Even a few short lines about what happened will be useful—e.g. what was happening before the spray, describe the police and list their ID numbers if you have them, and contact details of any witnesses. Keep this information safe so you can provide it to a lawyer later.
- Seek legal advice from one of these supportive law firms or legal centres: **[mals.au/contact/legal](https://mals.au/contact/legal)**

## You could also:

- Make a complaint to IBAC [[ibac.vic.gov.au/report](https://ibac.vic.gov.au/report)] or the Police Professional Standards Unit [[police.vic.gov.au/complaints](https://police.vic.gov.au/complaints)].
- Seek damages in a civil case (you have 3 years from the date of the incident to do this).
- Tell your story in the media.
- Contact MALS securely and let them know what happened. You can do this anonymously if you wish. Reports help MALS track the misuse of force/OC spray. **[mals.au/contact](https://mals.au/contact)**

## Work together:

- Talk as a group if others were sprayed or assaulted. Support each other.
- You could approach a lawyer together.
- Your activist group should support you as well.