

Arsenic Exposure

Health Effects, Sources, & Prevention



Health Effects

- Increased risk for some types of cancers including liver, bladder, kidney, lung, and skin
- Heart disease, diabetes, and immune and respiratory system effects
- Young children and pregnant women: affects fetal development; increased risk for liver, pancreatic, skin, hematopoietic, bladder, kidney, and lung cancer; bronchiectasis; COPD; AML; and chronic renal diseases

Common Sources

Food

Main source is through food:

- Meat, poultry, and fish, bivalves, shellfish
- Some fruit juices
- Mushrooms
- Rice (including rice cereal and other rice products such as brown-rice syrup)
- Seaweed (hijiki)



Actions you can take: Eat a variety of foods from the different food groups. For children see dietary advice from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Units (PEHSU).

Consumer Products

- Some imported health remedies and dietary supplements
- Pesticides
- Paint pigments
- Wood preservatives or “pressure treated” wood (copper chromated arsenic, CCA)



Actions you can take:

- Avoid buying products with arsenic
- Do not burn pressure treated wood
- Do not grow vegetables in planters made from CCA-containing lumber
- Be aware of playgrounds with CCA-containing lumber
- Avoid smoking cigarettes (which contain arsenic)

Private Well Water

Arsenic is a naturally occurring heavy metal found in the earth's crust. It can enter groundwater through rocks and soil contaminating drinking water wells. This is of higher concern in northern NJ because of its bedrock geology.



Actions you can take: If you have a private well, take steps to test and potentially treat arsenic in private well drinking water.

Soil

Kids are at greater risk since they are more likely to have contact with or play in dirt and put their hands or other objects into their mouths.



Actions you can take:

- Wash hands frequently; before eating, drinking; and after gardening
- Remove shoes, coats, and outerwear when coming into your home
- Clean home weekly using wet mops/cloths with soap and water to keep it as dust free as possible
- Vacuum carpeted areas before mopping uncarpeted floors
- Bathe pets frequently