



PUBLIC FACT SHEET

ARSENIC

What is arsenic?

Arsenic is a naturally occurring element widely distributed in the earth's surface. In the environment, arsenic is combined with oxygen, chlorine, and sulfur to form inorganic arsenic compounds. Arsenic in animals and plants combines with carbon and hydrogen to form organic arsenic compounds.

What are possible methods of exposure?

- Eating food or drinking water containing arsenic
- Breathing contaminated air
- Breathing sawdust or burning smoke from wood treated with arsenic.
- Living near uncontrolled hazardous waste sites containing arsenic.
- Living in areas with unusually high natural levels of arsenic in rock.

What are possible symptoms of arsenic exposure?

Inhalation:

- Sore throat
- Irritated lungs

Ingestion:

- Nausea & Vomiting
- Decreased production of red and white blood cells
- Abnormal heart rhythm
- Sensation of pins and needles in hands and feet
- Death

How is arsenic detected?

There are tests to measure the level of arsenic in blood, urine, hair, or fingernails.

What is the treatment for exposure to arsenic?

If you have been exposed to arsenic, contact the emergency medical authorities immediately.

Treatment consists of supportive medical care in a hospital setting.

For more information on arsenic contact:

Ottawa County Health Department
www.miOttawa.org

Center for Disease Control and Prevention
www.bt.cdc.gov/agent/arsenic/
Phone: (888) 246-2675