



PUBLIC FACT SHEET

THALLIUM

What is thallium?

Pure thallium is a bluish-white metal that is found in trace amounts in the earth's crust.

In the past, thallium was obtained as a by-product from melting other metals; however, it has not been produced in the United States since 1984.

Currently, all thallium is obtained from imports and from thallium reserves.

What are possible methods of exposure?

- eating food contaminated with thallium
- breathing air in industries that use thallium
- smoking cigarettes
- breathing low levels in air and water

What are possible symptoms of thallium exposure?

Reported symptoms include:

- vomiting
- diarrhea
- temporary hair loss
- damage to lungs, heart, liver and kidneys
- exposure has also caused death

Long term effects from exposure are unknown.

How is thallium detected?

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

What is the treatment for exposure to thallium?

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

Treatment consists of supportive medical care in a hospital setting.

For more information on thallium contact:

Ottawa County Health Department
www.miOttawa.org

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