

THALLIUM

Exposure to Thallium has the potential to harm your health. Contact with any hazardous substances can cause health effects and the occurrence and nature of the effects depend on how much, how long and how one comes into contact with the substance.

What is Thallium?

Thallium is found in the earth's crust in small amounts. Thallium is odorless and tasteless in its pure form.

How could I be exposed to Thallium?

People can be exposed to thallium by ingestion or inhalation.

What are the sources? Some people are exposed to thallium through the foods they eat, such as fish and shellfish. People may also be exposed to thallium through breathing contaminated air, drinking contaminated water, touching or ingesting soil, smoking cigarettes, or living near a hazardous waste site. Also used as a rat poison.

What are the health effects of Thallium Exposure?

Thallium exposure may cause:

- Numbness of fingers and/or toes
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Temporary hair loss

How can I limit or prevent my exposure to Thallium?

- Do not allow children to play in soil near uncontrolled hazardous waste sites.
- Avoid smoking.
- Test your well regularly if live near a hazardous waste site.

Is there a medical test to show if I have been exposed to Thallium?

Exposure can be measured with a hair or urine test, which tests the level of thallium in your body. Increased levels in your hair or urine may not indicate the health effects experienced from the exposure.

Additional Information

Call the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Health at (919) 707-5900 for additional information.

References

Agency for Toxic Substances & Disease Registry (ATSDR). Public Health Statement for Thallium. January 2015. Available at: www.atsdr.cdc.gov/phs/phs.asp?id=307&tid=49

Agency for Toxic Substances & Disease Registry (ATSDR). ToxFAQs for Thallium. February 2014. Available at: www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaqs/tf.asp?id=308&tid=49

United States Environmental Protection Agency. National Primary Drinking Water Regulations. May 2009. Available at: water.epa.gov/drink/contaminants/upload/mcl-2.pdf

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