



What is Chromium?

Chromium is a natural element in rocks, animals, plants, and soil. It is also released into the environment from some types of manufacturing, such as steel production, chrome plating, and wood preserving. It could be a solid, liquid, or gas. You can't taste or smell chromium.

How can chromium affect my health?

- There are different forms of chromium. Some, such as chromium (VI), are harmful to your health. Chromium (III) is a nutrient we all need to be healthy because it helps the body use protein, fat and sugar. Even so, too much could be harmful.
- Breathing in high levels of chromium can cause respiratory problems or damage your nose and lungs. Inhaling chromium (VI) in the workplace could cause lung cancer.
- Contact with your skin can cause sores and a loss of skin. Ingesting too much chromium can cause anemia or damage the stomach or intestines. More stomach tumors occur in humans who drink water contaminated with chromium (VI).

How are people exposed to chromium?

- People can ingest low levels of chromium (III) from eating food or by drinking contaminated water.
- You might have chromium in your workplace. It is used for chrome plating, dyes, pigments, leather tanning, wood preserving and in steel production.

How can I reduce my exposure to chromium?

- If you live near an uncontrolled hazardous waste site containing chromium, it could harm your health. Don't let your children play in the soil nearby.
- Chromium is in tobacco smoke. Don't smoke in enclosed places, like your car, or near your family or children.
- Your employer must provide you with information about hazardous chemicals at work, such as chromium. They have to give you training about proper handling. It's the law in Texas (Texas Hazard Communication Act, Chapter 502 of the Texas Health and Safety Code). Ask your workplace for training and protective gear to keep you safe.

Is there a medical test to check my chromium level?

- Yes, ask your doctor. There are tests for blood, urine, and hair to show higher than normal levels of chromium in your body. But, the test cannot predict what kind of health problems you might have as a result.

Contact the Texas Department of State Health Services if you have questions about chromium.



More information:

Texas Department of State Health Services

Environmental Surveillance and Toxicology Branch

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