



What you should know about antimony

What is antimony?

Antimony is a silvery, medium-hard metal found in the Earth's crust. Antimony can enter the environment during mining and processing, as well as during the production of alloys (mixture of metals); however, very little antimony mining occurs in the United States. Coal burning power plants, incinerators, and other industries that process antimony may also release it into the environment.



What happens to antimony in the environment?

- In solid form, antimony can break very easily but it is not destroyed by the environment
- In powdered form, small amounts can be dissolved in water
- Also in powdered form, antimony can stay in the air for a long period
- The majority of antimony ends up in sediment or soil by attaching to other particles such as iron, manganese, or aluminum.



How might I be exposed to antimony?

- By eating food, breathing air, or drinking water containing antimony naturally found in the environment
- By taking medications used to treat some parasitic infections that contain antimony
- By using clothing or plastics treated with a flame retardant containing antimony
- Working with or producing metal alloys containing antimony
- Handling or producing sheet and pipe metal or ammunition containing antimony
- Using paints, ceramics, enamels, and glass that contain antimony
- Handling fireworks containing antimony



How can antimony affect my health?

Effects of exposure depend on the form and amount of antimony encountered. Short-term exposure to high concentrations of antimony in the air can cause irritation of the eyes, lungs, and skin.

Long-term exposure to lower levels of antimony can cause heart problems (arrhythmia), joint or muscle pain, upset stomach, vomiting, diarrhea, and ulcers.

People with existing breathing issues, heart or kidney problems may be at increased risk for health problems from exposure to antimony.



How can I reduce my exposure to antimony?

Antimony is found naturally in the environment so people are regularly exposed to very low levels. Special measures are not needed to reduce exposure, but if you are concerned you can decrease your potential exposure to antimony by:

- Washing your hands frequently, especially after handling soil or metal objects.
- Keeping pets clean to reduce the amount of soil and dust brought into the house.
- Cleaning areas around doors, including rugs, furnace or air conditioning filters, and air ducts.
- Take precautions to reduce the amount of soil children ingest while playing outside

If you have an occupation that involves contacting antimony proper protective equipment may be necessary to reduce exposure.



For more information, contact the:
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