

# What is Nickel?

Nickel is an element found naturally in minerals and in the earth’s core. It’s common and is in all soil. Nickel is used to make stainless steel and other alloys. It might be part of ceramic, jewelry and battery production. You can’t taste or smell nickel.

## How are people exposed to nickel?

- Nickel enters the atmosphere from oil and coal burning plants and incinerators.
- Nickel can enter the environment from the release of industrial waste water.
- We are all exposed to nickel in the food we eat. Most drinking water contains small amounts of nickel. We breathe air containing small amounts of nickel from tobacco smoke. These levels are usually low and do not cause health concerns.
- You could have high exposure to nickel if you work in industries that use nickel.

## How can nickel affect my health?

- Some people are sensitive to nickel. They may have a rash after contact with nickel or have an asthma attack from exposure to food, water, or dust with nickel in it.
- People working in industries that process or use nickel could breathe in too much nickel dust. This can harm your breathing and lung function.

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- Workers exposed to very large amounts of nickel may develop lung or nasal sinus cancers.
- Workers who drink water with high amounts of nickel can have stomach aches, and damage to their blood or kidneys.

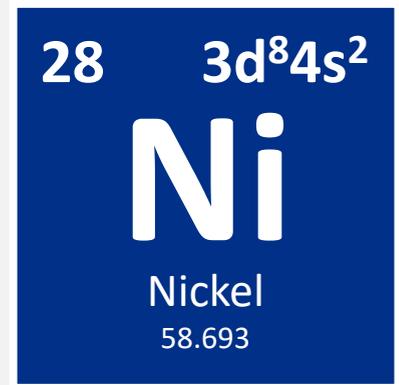
## How can I reduce my exposure?

- Ask your employer if your job involves nickel. Employers must provide you with the information, training and equipment needed to keep you safe at work. It's the law in Texas (Texas Hazard Communication Act, Chapter 502 of the Texas Health and Safety Code).
- Avoid jewelry that has nickel in it.

## Is there a medical test to show if I've been exposed to nickel?

- 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 nickel.**



### More information:

Texas Department of State  
Health Services

Environmental Surveillance  
and Toxicology Branch

Phone: 512-776-2222

Toll-free: 1-800-588-1248

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