

Arsenic

Arsenic (ar-seh-nik)

Tested in: Urine and Water

Reported in: Urine and Water

Learn how you can protect yourself and your family.



Is there an unsafe level of arsenic in water?

Yes, the EPA says that there is too much arsenic when levels are higher than 0.010 mg/L, but since it may be harmful to health, they recommend trying to remove any amount of arsenic, even if lower than 0.010 mg/L. Check your laboratory test report to see your personalized results.



What is Arsenic Speciation?

There are two varieties, or species, of arsenic that are significant in water: arsenic (III) and arsenic (V). Your lab report provides the *combined total* of arsenic detected in your water sample. However, if the arsenic result in your water is higher than 0.005 mg/L, the lab report will also provide the individual levels for both species (in a measurement of ug/L). This information will help a water treatment specialist determine the best system to reduce arsenic in your water should you, as the well owner/user, decide to install a water treatment system in your home.



Will exposure to arsenic harm my health?

Arsenic is a human carcinogen (causing cancer in people). Exposure to arsenic may also harm your

- dermal system (skin)
- gastrointestinal system
- hepatic system (liver)
- nervous system
- respiratory system



Is it possible to remove arsenic from drinking water?

Yes, you may be able to reduce the amount of chemicals in your water. First, it is important to find out how chemicals may be getting into your water. We recommend that you contact your county's environmental health department or a well specialist. They may want to test your water for bacteria or nitrate or look at your well for any damage. Testing for bacteria or nitrate may be available for free through your county.

You may also be able to install an in-home treatment system to reduce chemicals in the water you drink. Not all treatment systems remove all chemicals. Talk to a water treatment specialist to determine the best options for the chemical(s) that may have been found in your water tests.



Are there other ways I could limit my exposure to arsenic?

- Arsenic is sometimes found in foods, such as seafood, rice, and fruit juices. If you eat these foods, include variety in your diet.
- Some pressure-treated woods contain arsenic, so do not burn old pressure-treated wood.
- If you have older wood structures (decks, play structures, etc), apply sealants every couple years.

What is arsenic?

Arsenic is an element found in rocks and soil. Arsenic is common in Iowa. Arsenic may contaminate well water if the water from the well is surrounded by rocks and soil containing arsenic.

Arsenic may also be in some foods, such as seafood, rice, grape juice, and apple juice, as well as some herbal medicines and Ayurvedic products. Arsenic has been used in some pressure-treated woods, some pesticides, and some paint pigments. Products containing arsenic are no longer produced in the US but may still be imported from other countries.

Where can I find more information?

- https://www.cdc.gov/biomonitoring/Arsenic_FactSheet.html
- <https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/az/a.html>