Michigan Department of Health & Human Services

Cadmium

What is cadmium?

- Cadmium is an element naturally found in soil, rocks and plants.
- Cadmium is also in the environment because of industrial pollution.
- Cadmium is in paints and ceramic colorants. Cadmium is a major part of nickel-cadmium rechargeable batteries.

How can cadmium harm people's health?

- Exposure to high amounts of cadmium can increase the risk of health effects, including:
  - Kidney damage.
  - Fragile bones.
  - Lung damage and lung cancer when inhaled.
- Eating food or drinking water with very high amounts of cadmium can irritate the stomach. This leads to vomiting and diarrhea.
- Studies of young animals exposed to high amounts of cadmium before birth have shown effects on their development, behavior and learning.
  - More research is needed to learn if cadmium causes these same effects in people.

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How are people exposed to cadmium?	How can people reduce their exposure to cadmium?
Drinking water containing cadmium. Cadmium can be in groundwater and come from water pipes and plumbing.	Test private drinking water wells for cadmium. • To learn more about testing and maintaining private wells visit EH.Michigan.gov/CareforMiWell, call the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services at 800-648-6942 or contact your local health department. Learn about results from cadmium testing of public drinking water. • For reports on public water supplies, check the United States Environmental Protection Agency's Consumer Confidence Reports (CCRs) at EPA.gov/CCR or contact your local water utility.
Eating food containing cadmium. Everyday foods can have cadmium in them. 	Clean produce well. Peel the outer skin from root vegetables (e.g., carrots, beets, turnips) to remove dirt.
Smoking or vaping. Breathing secondhand smoke or vape aerosols.	Avoid breathing in smoke or vape aerosols. For help quitting smoking, call 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669).
Children may be exposed to cadmium by putting cheap metal jewelry in their mouths.	Do not allow young children to play with cheap metal jewelry, especially when they are unsupervised.
Breathing or swallowing cadmium during jobs or other activities, such as: • Metal smelting. • Battery making. • Recycling. • Electroplating. Breathing dust or accidentally swallowing soil containing cadmium.	When doing jobs or other activities with possible exposure to cadmium: • Wash your hands often, especially before eating or drinking. • Shower after working. • Use personal protective equipment. • Ensure good ventilation. • Do not eat, drink, smoke or vape in your workspace. Store and dispose of nickel-cadmium batteries properly. Contact your local waste and recycling authority on how to properly dispose of them. Dust and vacuum your home often.
Breastfeeding is a way that infants can be exposed to small amounts of cadmium.	The benefits of breastfeeding outweigh the risks from cadmium. Experts say that breastfeeding is still the healthiest choice for feeding your baby.

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