

Thallium in Water

Currently there is **NOT** a thallium exposure concern from Lehi's drinking water.

What is Thallium?

Thallium is a soft, bluish-white metal that is widely distributed in trace amounts in the earth's crust. In its pure form, it's odorless and tasteless. Thallium remains in the environment since it's a metal and can't be broken down to simpler substances.

Thallium is present in air, water, and soil. Levels of thallium in air and water are generally very low. The greatest exposure occurs when you eat food, mostly home-grown fruits and green vegetables contaminated by thallium. Thallium enters food because it is easily taken up by plants through the roots.

Health Effects of Thallium Exposure:

Short Term Symptoms*:

- Nausea and Vomiting
- Painful Burning in the Hands and Feet
- Dramatic Hair Loss

* All short term symptoms of thallium poisoning are temporary

Long Term Health Effects:

- Nervous System
- Kidneys
- Liver
- Lungs
- Heart

Thallium is not classifiable as to its human carcinogenicity

“Based upon the reported thallium concentrations in Lehi water, consuming garden vegetables grown in this water should not present an apparent health hazard.”

~Dr. Craig Dietrich, Toxicologist
Utah Department of Health

Conclusions:

Residents could have experienced temporary symptoms

- Nausea and vomiting
- Painful burning in hands and feet
- Dramatic hair loss

Recommendations:

- If you experience symptoms, see your physician
- Testing is available
- Contact your local health department

To Reduce your Exposure:

- Wash hands frequently especially before eating, handling food, or smoking
- Avoid hand to mouth activities
- Eat foods high in iron and calcium
- Wash and peel all homegrown fruits and vegetables
- Keep outside toys and furniture well maintained and clean
- Maintain good lawn or groundcover to prevent the potential of contact with bare soil
- Dust and vacuum inside your home regularly (dust using a damp cloth)
- Change A/C and furnace filters regularly

Based on the sampling data collected by the Lehi Water Department, the amount of thallium that residents could have been exposed to, between February 16 to March 8, 2012, could have resulted in temporary symptoms of thallium poisoning. Over this short period of exposure, truly harmful health effects would only have been expected if thallium concentrations in the water were 10,000 to 100,000 times the amount found in the sampling.”

~Dr. Craig Dietrich, Toxicologist
Utah Department of Health

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Local:

Utah County Health Department
Environmental Health
(801) 851-7525
www.utahcountyonline.org



State:

Utah Department of Health
Environmental Epidemiology Program
(801) 538-6191
www.health.utah.gov/enviroepi



Federal:

Agency for Toxic Substance and
Disease Registry
www.atsdr.cdc.gov
www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaqs

