

# Thallium Fact Sheet

Thallium is a metal that is found in nature. It is used in various specialized applications in electronics, medicine, and research. Historically, it was used as a rat poison, but this use was banned in 1972 because thallium is very toxic to humans. Thallium is released into the environment at very low levels from raw materials used by some industries, such as oil and gas operations, cement plants, and steel manufacturers.

## Thallium is found in

- Components used in electronics, such as semiconductors.
- Some drinking water sources, such as well water that has been affected by industrial or wastewater discharges. This could include discharges from some oil and gas operations.
- Air and dust near certain industrial facilities that can release thallium, such as cement plants and steel manufacturers.
- Cigarette and other tobacco smoke.

## Possible health concerns

Thallium is highly toxic and can harm many important processes in the body. Thallium:

- Can harm the nervous system.
- Can damage vision.
- Can cause hair loss.

## Possible ways to reduce exposure

- If your water comes from a private well, have it tested for metals, including thallium. (If your water comes from a public water supplier, it is already tested regularly for thallium.)
- If you work with materials that contain thallium or at facilities where thallium may be released into the air, follow all occupational safety guidelines for your industry.