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Heavy Metal Toxicity

Minerals that can Poison the Body and Cause Chronic Illness

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Many heavy metals are classed as toxic causing a wide array of heavy metal poisoning symptoms and disrupting human health.

Everyday numerous hazardous heavy metals are inhaled and absorbed. The major concern with heavy metals is their ability to accumulate in the environment. Acute heavy metal toxicity is rare; however, chronic low-grade toxicity may be more damaging long-term, contributing to chronic illness.

According to the fourth edition of *Mosby's Medical, Nursing & Allied Health Dictionary* (Mosby, 1994) a heavy metal is "a metallic element with specific gravity five or more times that of water."

Heavy metals include:

- Antimony
- Arsenic
- Cadmium
- Cerium
- Chromium
- Cobalt
- Copper
- Gallium
- Gold
- Iron
- Lead
- Manganese
- Mercury
- Nickel
- Platinum
- Silver
- Tellurium
- Thallium
- Tin
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Nutritional health requires heavy metals such as [chromium, iron, manganese, and zinc](#). They are not toxic unless taken in large amounts. Other heavy metals such as [mercury](#), arsenic, and lead are toxic heavy metals, even at low levels.

Aluminium, although having a toxicity risk to humans, is not a heavy metal.

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Heavy Metal Poisoning

Heavy metals and other toxins may alter, remove, or impair the production of specific molecules needed in the body. They may alter the structure of various entities such as the mitochondria or a cell nucleus. Heavy metals may create disturbances in the cell-to-cell communication occurring between inflammatory mediators, nerve cells, or hormones.

Toxic heavy metals target sites such as membrane or structural proteins, enzymes, or DNA molecules. Once at the target site, they can displace an important mineral from its binding site and “pretend” to be this mineral. This is called “molecular mimicry”; however, they cannot perform the mineral's function and so inhibit any activity at the binding site, affecting cellular function.

Symptoms of Heavy Metal Toxicity

Heavy metals can be hard to diagnose, however, due to the wide variety of ambiguous symptoms associated with heavy metal toxicity. Heavy metal toxicity symptoms may include:

- Headache
- Fatigue
- Muscle pains
- Indigestion
- Tremors
- Constipation
- Anaemia
- Pallor
- Dizziness
- Poor concentration

Heavy Metal Analysis

Blood, hair and urine are the most common forms for heavy metal analysis. However, each toxic metal has different attributes and may require more than one test for accuracy. For example, hair analysis will provide more reliable information on the level of mercury from seafood sources (methylmercury) than for mercury from dental amalgam fillings (elemental mercury). A urine test clarifies methylmercury toxicity and tests for elemental mercury. This involves providing a urine sample then ingesting a chelating agent, which moves the mercury from the tissues, and then following up with another urine test. This measures the level of mercury before chelation and after.

Heavy metal toxicity may be a “silent” threat. As people age they accumulate more heavy metal but are also more susceptible to the toxic effects. Toxicity can cause a wide range of subtle symptoms, but the damage is profound. More frequent testing for heavy metal toxicity may benefit human health in the long term.

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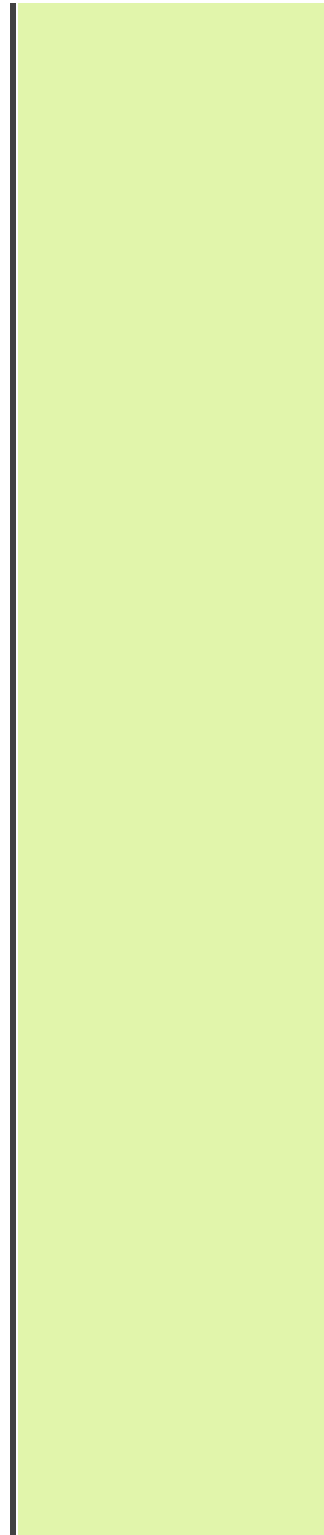


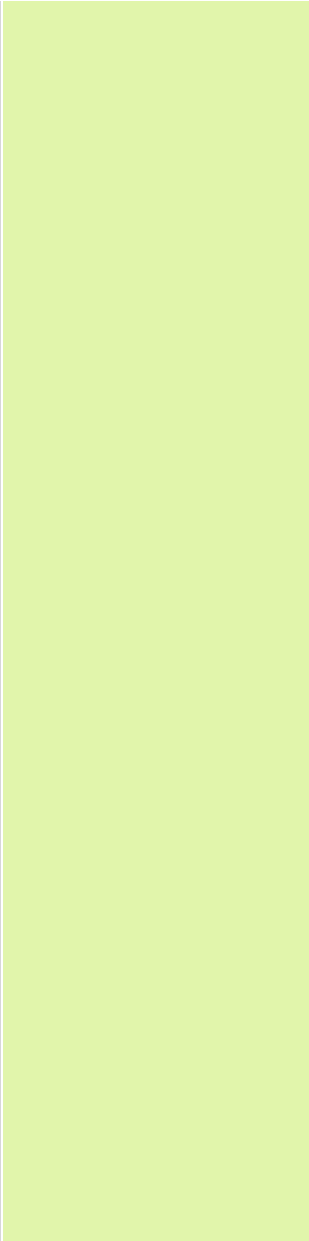
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