

What I Can Do: How to Protect Yourself from Manganese Dust

What is manganese?

Manganese is a naturally occurring substance that is found naturally in some rocks and soil, as well as in steel and a number of consumer products. Small amounts of manganese can also be found in food and it is necessary for good health. However, if you are exposed to especially large amounts of manganese over a long time, it can cause health problems.

How can I be exposed to manganese?

Because manganese is natural and small amounts are necessary for your health, we are all regularly exposed to low levels in the water, air, soil and food. People can be exposed to higher levels of manganese in a number of ways:

- Some people with certain industrial jobs, like welding or steel-making, may have an increased chance of being exposed to high levels of manganese.
- People who smoke tobacco or inhale second-hand smoke are typically exposed to higher levels of manganese. Manganese can also be found in automobile exhaust.
- Areas with a history of industrial activity, like the Southeast Side of Chicago, may have higher amounts of manganese in the soil. People who inhale dirt in these areas or dig in it regularly may be exposed to higher levels of manganese.

Is there manganese in my backyard?

Small amounts of manganese are found in soil everywhere. In urban environments near former and current industrial sites, there may be more manganese in the soil and dust may have increased levels of manganese too.

How can I reduce my exposure to manganese dust?

There are a number of ways everyone can reduce their exposure to manganese dust and make their homes healthier.

- Regularly clean your floors and wipe down any counters and surfaces to keep them free of dust, since dust may settle on floors and surfaces in your home.
- Make sure all family members remove their shoes before entering your home to help keep soil and manganese dust outside.
- You may wish to keep windows closed on very dry and windy days when dust is visible.

Can I have a garden if there's manganese in the soil?

If you live in a place with a history of industrial activity, it is always best to use a raised bed for your garden. With a raised bed, you purchase and lay the soil yourself, so you know it is clean. Also, wash all vegetables with cold water and a brush to help remove dirt before cooking or eating. Also, wash your hands, clothes and shoes after gardening to avoid tracking soil and dust into your home.

What can I do to protect my child from manganese in soil or outside my home?

Prevent young children from playing in bare soil, which can contain manganese and other contaminants. If possible, plant grass over the soil, or cover it with mulch or wood chips. You can also let children play in sandboxes. And remember to have your children remove their shoes before coming inside after playing outside.

Where can I find out more?

The City of Chicago has taken a number of steps to protect and improve public health and the environment. To learn more about ongoing actions to protect residents from manganese, please visit www.cityofchicago.org/manganese.

For additional information about how manganese enters the body and how to reduce your exposure to manganese, please visit: <https://tinyurl.com/ybjz88x3>