



Learn more.

Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department
Environmental Health

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Rev. 10/2024

Arsenic and Lead in the Soil

Protect your family!



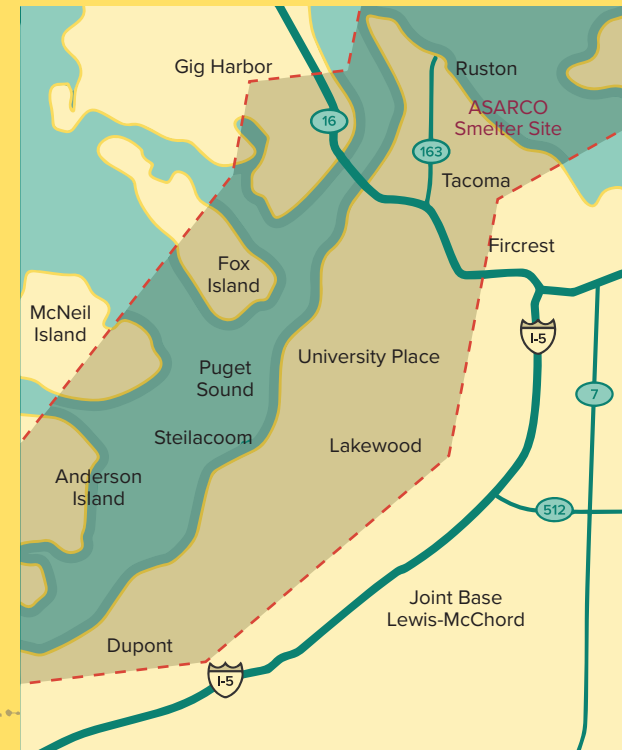
Arsenic and lead in Pierce County.

For almost 100 years, the ASARCO copper smelter blew arsenic and lead from a smoke stack throughout Pierce and King counties.

The smelter closed in 1986. Even though the smelter no longer operates, arsenic and lead remain in the soil and will continue to be a health risk for years to come.

Pierce County communities most affected are:

- North Tacoma.
- Northeast Tacoma.
- West end Tacoma.
- University Place.
- Fircrest.
- Lakewood.
- Steilacoom.
- Parts of Gig Harbor, Fox Island, Anderson Island, Fort Lewis, and Dupont.



The risk to human health.

Eating and breathing dust that contains arsenic and lead can contribute to poor health, especially in young children.

- Lead is linked to developmental disabilities in children and may affect IQ.
- Arsenic may cause cancer later on in life and may also contribute to heart disease.
- Children under age 6 are at greatest risk because they put things into their mouths.
- Dust can be inhaled or eaten when it gets on food or anything that is put into mouths.

Contact your healthcare provider.

If you are concerned about exposure to arsenic, lead or other contaminants, contact your healthcare provider for more information.

TOM THE
GARDENER



Healthy Actions

You and your family can do simple things to reduce contact with arsenic and lead in dirt. Even small changes can help you reduce your risk of contact with arsenic, lead and other harmful chemicals.

Kick off your shoes.

Dust and dirt are tracked inside on shoes.

- Leave your shoes at the door or use a wipe-off mat to reduce dirt and dust in your home.
- Provide a shoe rack or designate an area for shoes at your door.

Use plenty of soap and water.

Dirt is on hands, toys, shoes, clothing and pets.

- Wash your hands well before eating and after working or playing in the soil. Hand sanitizers don't remove arsenic and lead.
- Use a scrub brush to clean dirt from under your nails.
- Wash heavily soiled clothing separate from other laundry.
- Wash children's toys, bedding and pacifiers frequently.

Mop, dust and vacuum.

Dirt and dust particles can enter your home through windows and doors.

- Dust and dirt settles on carpet, throw rugs, curtains, upholstered furniture, windowsills and bookcases.
- Damp-dust and vacuum at least once a week. Always use a damp mop or damp dust cloth.

Keep pets clean.

Pets walk, roll and lie down in dirt and soil. Their fur and paws bring soil and dust inside.

- Wipe off all dirt and mud before your pet comes into your home.
- Brush and bathe your pet regularly.
- Restrict your pet to parts of your home that are free from carpet and upholstery.
- Give your pets their own bed or place within your home.

Maintain your home and yard.

Cover bare patches and maintain your home to keep harmful dirt away from your family.

- Cover bare patches in your yard with ground cover like grass, gravel, wood, mulch product or native plants. Native plants require less water and maintenance.
- Maintain the painted surfaces of your home. Homes built before 1978 may contain lead paint. When lead paint chips or wears away, it becomes a major source of lead in the soil.
- Have your soil tested.

Contact us for more information.

Dirt Alert

Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department
dirtalert@tpchd.org • (253) 798-6492
tpchd.org/dirtalert • dirtalert.info

Tacoma Smelter Plume Project

Washington Department of Ecology
(360) 407-7688 ext. 2
ecology.wa.gov/Tacoma-smelter

Eat a healthy diet.

Iron, calcium and vitamin C help to decrease absorption of lead.

- Eat a diet rich with these nutrients.
- Include foods like broccoli, spinach, potatoes, dairy products and citrus fruits.

Wash fruits and vegetables.

Arsenic and lead may be on the surface of produce.

- Wash all fruits and vegetables to remove dirt. Use a scrub brush on potatoes, squash and carrots.
- There is a slight chance that leafy vegetables, like lettuce or kale, grown in contaminated soil may absorb very small amounts of contaminants.
- Grow your produce in raised beds made with arsenic-free materials.
- Always wear shoes and gloves when you garden or work in soil. Take them off before you go in your home.
- Wear a dust mask while gardening or wet down soil to reduce dust.

