

# Arsenic and Lead in the South Puget Sound Area

Arsenic and lead occur naturally in soil, minerals and rock. They can also make their way into soil, air and water through emissions from industry, fertilizers, pesticides and lead-based paint.

For almost 100 years, arsenic, lead and other contaminants were blown throughout Pierce, King, Kitsap, and Thurston Counties from the now-closed ASARCO copper smelter in Ruston, Washington.

Following some simple guidelines, such as the Healthy Actions, can help you to reduce your contact with soil and dust that may contain arsenic and lead.

## What's on your Shoes???

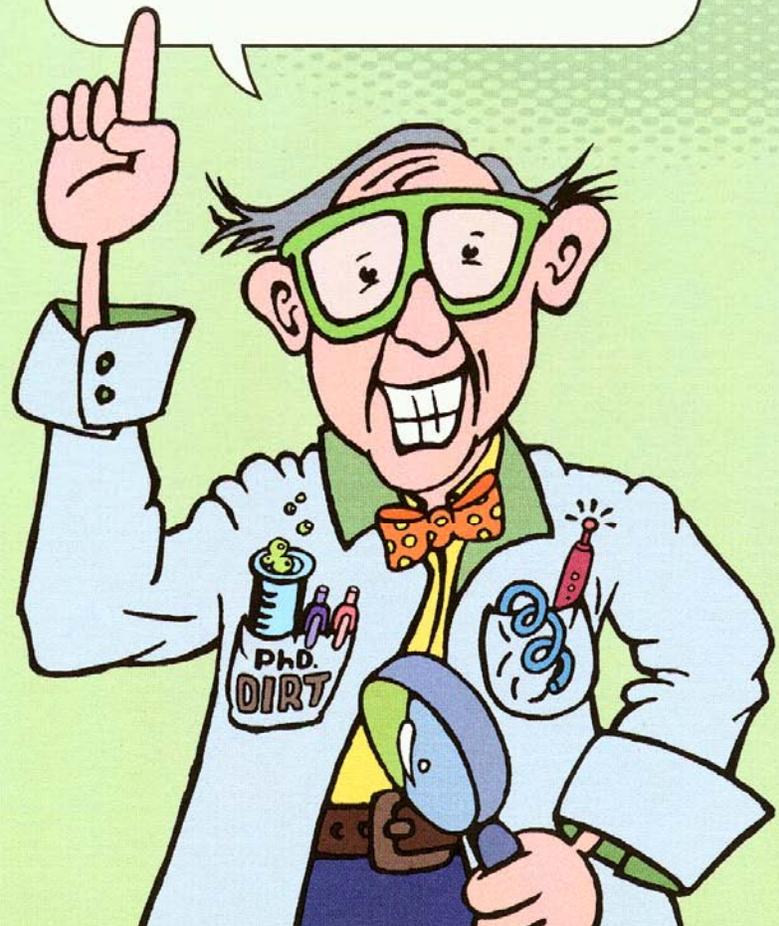
Most soil and dust in homes is carried inside on shoes, clothing and pets. It then settles on everything from tables to rugs. Since soil can contain pollutants such as arsenic, lead, bacteria, PCBs and pesticides, bringing it inside your home can pose a health risk for your family.

**It's a good idea to take off your shoes before coming into your home.**

## The Risk to Your Health

Eating and breathing dust that contains arsenic and lead can contribute to poor health. Arsenic is known to cause cancer. Lead is linked to developmental disabilities in children. At greatest risk are children under the age of 6 because of their tendency to put things into their mouths. Dust can be inhaled into your lungs and it's eaten when it falls on food or is present on anything you put in your mouth.

Minimize your family's health risk by limiting their contact with dust and soil.



## Use Plenty of Soap and Water

- Wash your hands and face before eating and after working or playing in soil. Use a scrub brush to clean dirt from under your nails.
- Launder heavily soiled clothing separately.
- Wash children's toys, bedding and pacifiers frequently.

## Garden Safely

- Wash fruits and vegetables before eating them.
- Before preparing vegetables, wash them with soap and a scrub brush, making sure all the dirt is removed.
- Peel carrots, potatoes and other root crops. Throw the peelings away instead of composting.
- Use raised beds constructed with arsenic-free materials. Fill them with clean soil.



# Healthy Actions

## Maintain Your Grounds

- Cover bare patches of soil with a ground cover such as grass, gravel or wood/mulch product.
- Maintain painted surfaces. Lead-based paint may have been used on homes built before 1978. When the paint chips or chinks into the soil, it becomes a source of lead that can be tracked into your home.

## Keep Pets Clean

- Pets often walk, roll and lie down in dirt and soil and then track it inside on their fur and paws.
- Wipe off all excess dirt, mud and soil before your pet comes into your home.
- Keep your pets clean. Brush and bathe them regularly.
- Restrict your pets to areas of your home that are free from carpeting and upholstery. Give pets their own sleeping spots.



## Mop, Dust and Vacuum

- Remove shoes before entering the house. Place a "wipe-off" mat at outside entrances.
- Damp-mop floors and dust window sills, bookcases and other surfaces at least once a week.
- Vacuum several times a week. Use a bag designed to filter "allergens" or a HEPA (High Efficiency Particulate Arrestor) filter.
- Change your vacuum cleaner bag at least once a month.

## Eat a Healthy Diet

- Eat healthy. Foods that contain the daily recommended amounts of iron and calcium help to decrease the absorption of lead.
- Prevent children from eating dirt.
- If you are concerned about exposure to lead, contact your physician to find out more about blood-lead testing. Presently, there is no reliable test to show how much exposure a person may have had to arsenic in the soil.

### information

For more information please contact the Thurston County Public Health and Social Services Department, Environmental Health Division

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[www.co.thurston.wa.us/health/tacomasmelterplume](http://www.co.thurston.wa.us/health/tacomasmelterplume)