

[What is Dioxin?](#)

Dioxin is one of the most toxic chemicals known. A report released for public comment in September 1994 by the US Environmental Protection Agency clearly describes dioxin as a serious public health threat. The public health impact of dioxin may rival the impact that DDT had on public health in the 1960's. According to the EPA report, not only does there appear to be no "safe" level of exposure to dioxin, but levels of dioxin and dioxin-like chemicals have been found in the general US population that are "at or near levels associated with adverse health effects." The EPA report confirmed that dioxin is a cancer hazard to people; that exposure to dioxin can also cause severe reproductive and developmental problems (at levels 100 times lower than those associated with its cancer causing effects); and that dioxin can cause immune system damage and interfere with regulatory hormones.

The International Agency for Research on Cancer [IARC] --part of the World Health Organization --announced February 14, 1997, that the most potent dioxin, 2,3,7,8-TCDD, is now considered a Class 1 carcinogen, meaning a "known human carcinogen."

Dioxin is a general term that describes a group of hundreds of chemicals that are highly persistent in the environment. The most toxic compound is 2,3,7,8-tetrachlorodibenzo-p-dioxin or TCDD. The toxicity of other dioxins and chemicals like PCBs that act like dioxin are measured in relation to TCDD. Dioxin is formed as an unintentional by-product of many industrial processes involving chlorine such as waste incineration, chemical and pesticide manufacturing and pulp and paper bleaching. Dioxin was the primary toxic component of Agent Orange, was found at Love Canal in Niagara Falls, NY and was the basis for evacuations at Times Beach, MO and Seveso Italy.