

FACT SHEET

Uranium

What is it?

Uranium is the heaviest of all the naturally occurring elements. Uranium is used in the production of electricity, nuclear weapons, nuclear medicines,

Are there other names for it?

Uranium is often referred to by its isotopes, Uranium-238, Uranium-235, and Uranium-234. It also is known by its chemical symbol U.

Where does it come from?

Uranium is found in rocks and minerals throughout the earth with the greatest concentration in the western United States. In its natural state uranium does not appear in its metallic state. In rare cases uranium is present in groundwater as the result of industrial processes or improper waste disposal.

Why should I be concerned about it?

The USEPA has set a maximum contaminant level of 0.030 mg/L of uranium in drinking water. This is based upon the carcinogenic health effects from its radioactive decay and also elevated levels of uranium has been shown to lead to changes in kidney function that are indicators of potential future kidney failure.

What effect will boiling have on it?

Uranium cannot be removed from water by boiling. Boiling water containing uranium will concentrate it thus increasing its concentration.

How do I remove it?

Uranium can be a real challenge to remove depending upon the concentration. Uranium has been successfully removed by in some cases by ion exchange, reverse osmosis, and by activated carbon.