

Dangerously High Arsenic Levels Found in Rice

What is Arsenic Anyway?

Arsenic is a naturally occurring, toxic element found in the earth. It is found in over 200 different minerals. There are two main types of arsenic: organic and inorganic. Organic arsenic compounds are primarily found in marine life, but they are also sometimes found in terrestrial life forms. Exposure to arsenic from organic sources is widely considered to be less toxic than exposure to inorganic arsenic.

A Poison Fit for a King

Arsenic has been used as a poison for centuries. Assassins have historically been very fond of arsenic because symptoms of arsenic poisoning resembled other sicknesses like food poisoning. The resulting death would look like natural causes. In low doses, arsenic poisoning could cause diarrhea, confusion, paralysis, or weakness. Arsenic was difficult to detect as it has little odor, almost no taste, and it doesn't affect the color of food. How many kings and queens have died of arsenic poisoning? No one knows, but many historians speculate that kings and queens who died young rarely died of natural causes.

Where Does All This Arsenic Come From?

The majority of arsenic that we are exposed to is not of natural origin. Natural processes can bring arsenic into the atmosphere (such as volcano eruptions), but only one third of

the arsenic in our atmosphere is of natural origin. Arsenic can be found in the earth's crust, in deeply drilled wells, and in rocks, soil, air and water.

We Have Industry to Thank for This

Industrial activities such as mining, smelting, and the burning of coal in power plants all play a role in contaminating our environment with arsenic. Arsenic is produced commercially from arsenic trioxide, which is one of the leftover byproducts of smelting copper and other metals. Arsenic is commonly used by the timber industry as a preservative for treating wood. Arsenic is also an active ingredient in many insecticides and herbicides, and it is a common additive in chicken and swine feed (apparently it is used to fatten them up). The timber industry and agriculture industry account for over 90% of environmental arsenic pollution that is not due to natural processes.

No One Would Want to Die This Way

Consistent exposure to even small amounts of arsenic has been linked to several diseases, many of which are fatal. Arsenic is so toxic that it causes many different cancers, including skin cancer, lung cancer, bladder cancer, kidney cancer, liver cancer and prostate cancer. Over consumption of arsenic has also been linked to diabetes, cardiovascular disease, reproductive problems, and it is known to compromise the immune system.

How Arsenic Gets into Rice

Many plants can absorb arsenic from its environment and rice is one those plants. Rice absorbs high amounts of arsenic from the soil, from water and from pesticides. Unfortunately, with so much arsenic contaminating the soil and water, organic rice

can contain dangerous levels of arsenic even though it has not been exposed to pesticides. Counter-intuitively, there are actually higher levels of arsenic found in brown rice than in white rice. This is because more of the arsenic is found in the outer layers of the grain. The outer layers of the rice are removed during the processing that turns brown rice into white rice. (This processing also removes the majority of the nutrition found in rice).

While the FDA Does Nothing, Consumer Reports Steps Up

Consumer Reports has been doing the job that the FDA should have been doing for a long time now. On their website, you can find recommended weekly allowances for rice consumption based upon the levels of arsenic that rice contains. There is no federal limit for levels of arsenic in rice (but there is a *biological limit*, and one of its many names is cancer).

Since 2012, Consumer Reports has been asking the FDA to set a limit for arsenic in rice, a request that has been ignored. Over the past couple of years, Consumer Reports have tested over 700 foods containing rice, and they have tested hundreds of different samples of rice grown in different regions. It turns out that knowing where your rice is grown is very helpful if you wish to avoid high levels of arsenic in your food.

Not All Rice Fields Are Created Equal

Rice grown in California, white basmati rice grown in California, India and Pakistan and sushi rice grown in the US typically has almost half of the arsenic content as rice grown elsewhere. Rice that is grown in the US (with the exceptions being Californian rice, quick cook rice and sushi rice)

contain the highest levels of arsenic. Rice labeled as having been grown in Louisiana, Texas and Arkansas also stood out as having very high levels of arsenic in it.

One company in particular stands out as being proactive on this issue. Lundberg Farms is located in California. Their CEO, Grant Lundberg, recently issued a statement about the high levels of arsenic found in rice.

“We recently updated the published levels of arsenic in our rice, which now covers three consecutive years of data. I am happy to report that the levels of inorganic arsenic continue to remain low, and average less than half of the standard established by Codex. We are also actively engaged in the development of a code of practice through Codex to help develop ways to reduce arsenic levels even further.”

Codex is an international standard. Once again, we have no standards to rely on from the FDA.

Conclusion

According to the USA Rice Federation, you should eat rice because the benefits outweigh the risks. These are the people who are selling us rice, so no surprise there. The FDA recommends that Americans consume a variety of grains, and they say they're looking into the arsenic problem. We recommend that you limit the amount of grains in your diet, especially rice. Also when you eat rice, eat rice that is grown in California. A healthy diet consists of 80% raw produce, with more vegetables than fruits as the main staple of your diet – not grains of any variety.

Recommended Supplements:

- Shillington's Intestinal Detox
- HM Complex – Pure Encapsulations
- Shillington's Total Nutrition Formula

Further Reading:

- *Consumer Reports Found Unsafe Arsenic Levels in Rice and Poultry (especially brown rice)*
- *Poisoning the Mind: 7 Heavy Metals to Cleanse for your Mental Health (names, symptoms, research, common food sources)*
- *How To Detoxify From Vaccinations & Heavy Metals*
- *Top 5 foods that detox heavy metals and toxins*
- *Total Nutrition – Make Your Own Homemade Multivitamin and Mineral Formula*
- *What's in Your Water?*

Sources:

- *Arsenic: A Murderous History – Dartmouth Toxic Metals*
- *How much arsenic is in your rice? – Consumer Reports*
- *Arsenic – Green Facts*