

Health Effects of Chemicals at Superfund Sites

- Hazardous waste sites pose a serious risk to public health. The Superfund program was created to mitigate human health risks by cleaning up these sites.
- Risk assessments are done at each site to determine the threat level that the site poses to human health.
 - Assessors seek to identify a “safe level” – the level of a hazardous substance at which health issues are unlikely, and cancer risk is low.
- The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) maintains a listing of hazardous substances found at Superfund sites.¹
 - Toxicological profiles that detail associated human health risks are created for each hazardous substance on the registry.
- Notable human health risks associated with hazardous substances released at Superfund sites include²:
 - Cancer
 - Birth defects
 - Nerve damage
 - Liver damage
- Toxic chemicals have also been associated with developmental and behavioral issues in children. Children conceived to mothers living near a Superfund site were found to be³:
 - 7.4% more likely to repeat a grade level.
 - 6.6% more likely to be suspended from school.
 - 10% more likely to be diagnosed with a cognitive disability.
 - At risk for lower standardized test scores.

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¹ US EPA. (June 2018). *Human Health Risks*. Retrieved from <https://www.epa.gov/superfund/human-health-risks>.

² US GAO. (GAO 1995). *Superfund: Information on Current Health Risks*. GAO Report Number GAO/RCED-95-205. Available online at <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/GAOREPORTS-RCED-95-205/html/GAOREPORTS-RCED-95-205.htm>.

³ Persico, C., Figlio, D., & Roth, J. (2016). *Inequality before birth: The developmental consequences of environmental toxicants*. (NBER Working Paper No. 22263). Retrieved from the National Bureau of Economic Research website: <http://www.nber.org/papers/w22263>.