



The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) is a federal public health agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It was created by the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980 (also known as the Superfund legislation). ATSDR's mission is to serve the public by using the best science, taking responsive public health actions, and providing trusted health information to prevent harmful exposures and disease related to toxic substances.

Environmental Health

Results of the Beryllium Sensitivity Testing in Elmore, Ohio

Overview

In 2001, Senator DeWine (R-Ohio) asked the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) to find out whether residents in Elmore, Ohio, were at risk because of beryllium particles on workers' clothes and shoes and in emissions from the local beryllium plant. In response, ATSDR reviewed what was known about beryllium releases at the facility.

ATSDR concluded that current releases are not a problem, but that the health risk from past releases could not be determined. For persons concerned about past releases, ATSDR offered to test residents for beryllium sensitivity (BeS) with the beryllium lymphocyte proliferation test (BeLPT).

What is beryllium sensitivity?

BeS is an immune system response to beryllium exposure. BeS can develop in a person soon after exposure begins or years later. Chronic beryllium disease (CBD), a serious lung disease, has developed in some persons who have BeS.

Who was tested for BeS?

July 2006, ATSDR staff went to Elmore to offer testing for BeS. ATSDR tested persons who met at least one of the eligibility criteria:

- lived with beryllium workers,
- worked with beryllium metals in a local machine shop,
- lived 1.25 miles or less from the Brush Wellman plant, or
- had a diagnosis of sarcoidosis.

How many people were tested?

Eighteen eligible persons were tested:

- three people lived with beryllium workers AND lived 1.25 miles or less from the plant;
- seven lived with beryllium workers but lived more than 1.25 miles from the plant; and
- eight lived 1.25 miles or less from the plant but did not live with beryllium workers.

What were the test results?

All 18 persons had normal BeLPT test results. No one tested was considered sensitive to beryllium. However, the possibility remains that other residents in the community who do not work with beryllium have been sensitized.

What were the test results?

ATSDR does not recommend additional community-based testing at this time. The Ottawa County Health Department will provide information to local physicians about BeS and CBD. This information will describe how to a) identify beryllium exposure, b) test for sensitization, and c) refer patients to specialists.

Where can I get more information?

If you have concerns about your health, please talk to your personal physician or other health care provider. If you have questions about the community service testing, contact Dr. Dan Middleton by telephone at 404-498-0565 or by e-mail at dmiddleton@cdc.gov. Call 1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636) for general inquiries.