

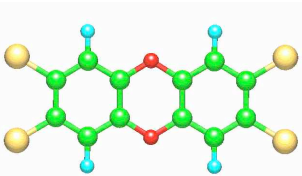
Dioxins & Furans: Who are THEY?



provided by **Coming Alongside**, an Environmental Services Organization

Persistent, Diverse, & Dangerous

Dioxins & Furans are two classes of compounds that are almost exclusively generated by humans in industrial processes. They remain in the soil and in the body for very long times, making them difficult to remediate or eliminate from contaminated environments. The full health effects of dioxins & furans are not entirely understood, yet what we do know makes them very dangerous to any individual living near a chemical processing or industrial plant that generates these compounds. Like mercury, many dioxins & furans accumulate up the food chain, further increasing the threat to life and well being.



Dioxins & Furans, as a whole, pose a significant environmental health risk. Dozens of compounds are classified as dioxin or furan, yet their effects on human health vary widely.

In order to understand the threat posed by these classes of compounds, as a whole, both the World Health Organization and the Environmental Protection Agency have identified toxicity factors associated with each compound that allow a particular contaminated area to be expressed in terms of a (weighted average) health risk. Thus, an individual can find out the total health risk posed by these compounds rather than having to sort through each individually.

Some chemical and industrial processing plants emit significant levels of dioxins & furans, creating an ominous health risk to those living in the vicinity. Further darkening the picture for dioxins & furans is that they accumulate in fat/lipid tissues in the body, the natural flushing mechanisms of the body (which are water based) move other materials and toxins out while leaving dioxins & furans to concentrate more over time. The higher up the food chain, the worse the problem.

Some mitigation measures can be taken to reduce critical exposures to dioxins & furans. However, these highly toxic compounds must be taken very seriously as they are not readily eliminated by the body and can cause a broad range of long term chronic disease and terminal illnesses (e.g. cancer).

What can you do?

ABSOLUTELY AVOID

- Eating fish and shellfish from contaminated waters (both salt and fresh).

TRY TO MINIMIZE

- Eating dairy products from contaminated areas.

REDUCE

- Intake of home grown crops (especially leafy and root crops) from contaminated soils

GO THE EXTRA MILE

- Understand the emissions from local chemical and industrial processing plants. Dioxins and furans are extremely expensive to test in the soil and medical tests are inaccessible. .

For more information, please refer to www.comingalongside.org