

Information for those seeking a test for depleted uranium (DU)

What are the tests?

- An initial urine test (Total Uranium Test) will measure the level of uranium in a person's urine. If the Total Uranium Test is elevated, then a more sophisticated test (Depleted Uranium Test) is required to determine depleted uranium (DU) exposure.
- In many regions of New Mexico, there are high levels of uranium in the water. Another test will measure the amount of uranium in your tap water. If your urine is elevated for uranium, it will be tested for DU, regardless of the uranium concentration in your water.

What can the Total Uranium Test tell me?

The Total Uranium Test *can*:

- Detect exposure you've had to any source of uranium, including DU.
- In combination with the water test, tell you if one source of the uranium is your drinking water.

The Total Uranium Test *cannot*:

- By itself tell you what percentage of this uranium is DU.

How much can the DU Test tell me about my exposure to DU?

The DU Test *can*:

- Detect past exposure to DU in the Persian Gulf at levels well below those which most medical experts believe would carry any significant risk to health.

The DU urine test *cannot*:

- Tell you for certain when or where a person's exposure to DU happened.
- Detect very low exposures to DU especially if they happened many years ago.

- Replace testing for programs such as the VA's Gulf War Registry Program.

Can the tests tell me anything about my health?

- No, the urine test only gives information about exposure to DU. The test cannot show up the presence or absence of disease.

Who is running the test?

- The NM Department of Health's Environmental Epidemiology Bureau is submitting both the initial urine test as well as a home water sample to the NM Scientific Laboratory Division.
- If your sample is elevated, a second urine sample will be collected from you and sent to an independent laboratory for isotopic analysis to determine if you have been exposed to DU or natural uranium.

Who is eligible for testing?

Individuals who are/were:

- active duty personnel in the US military; or
- military veterans of the US military

AND:

Involved in the Persian Gulf War, the Afghanistan conflict, or the current war in Iraq.

Is there a time limit for applying for the initial test?

Yes: the closing date for receipt of requests for participation is February 29th 2008.

Will I have to pay for the tests?

- No. The New Mexico Department of Health's Environmental Epidemiology Bureau pays for the test. Funds were allocated for this purpose by the New Mexico legislature in 2007.

What do the tests involve?

Total Uranium Test

- You will receive a packet containing instructions, sample containers, and a questionnaire.
- One container will be used to collect your urine, first thing in the morning. You will be given guidance on how and when to collect the urine.
- Your urine sample and completed questionnaire will be picked up by a staff member of the Environmental Health Epidemiology Bureau. The staff will discuss any difficulties you may have had collecting the sample or completing the questionnaire.
- Your samples will then be sent to the New Mexico Scientific Laboratory Division in Albuquerque for testing.
- You will receive a letter telling you the results of the analysis and what the results mean. In case you have any questions about the test or your results, a toll-free telephone helpline will be available.
- The test results can be sent to your doctor if you wish.

Water Test for Uranium

- Another container will be used to take a sample of your tap water. You will be given guidance on how to collect this sample.
- Your water sample will also be picked up by Environmental Health Epidemiology Bureau staff.

Depleted Uranium Test

- When you receive the letter telling you about the results of the analysis, you will be told if your uranium levels are elevated. If they are, you can contact us to arrange another urine sample for testing for depleted uranium. If your first sample is not elevated, then you would also have a low concentration of DU.
- The urine sample for the Depleted Uranium Test is collected over a 24-hour period.

Will my urine be tested for anything else?

- A chemical called creatinine will also be measured. This is to help take account of the fact that some people drink more fluids than others, and therefore have more dilute urine. Your urine will not be tested for anything else.

Why is a 24-hour specimen necessary for the DU Test?

- Currently a 24-hour specimen is thought necessary to ensure that the result of the test is sufficiently accurate. Smaller samples of urine have not been shown to give the required accuracy for exposures that occurred many years before testing.

Can I continue to take my prescribed medication during the urine collection?

Yes.

Can I eat and drink normally during the urine collection?

Yes.

How will my privacy and the security of my samples be ensured?

- All staff involved in the Environmental Health Epidemiology Bureau are subject to a strict code of patient confidentiality.
- An individual code number (which you will be told) will identify your sample and questionnaire.
- No identifiable information will be passed to anyone outside the Environmental Health Epidemiology Bureau without prior consent from the individual concerned. Non-identifiable information may be used to present aggregated results for the entire state. For example, we might present the total number of people who had a test for total uranium and the total number who tested high for either total uranium and/or DU.