

PCB Contamination From UConn Parking Garage:

What Can I Do To Reduce my Exposure To Soil in my Yard?

BACKGROUND

In July, the University of Connecticut (UConn) began planning efforts to demolish the Stamford campus parking garage. Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) were discovered in the caulk and paint at the garage. Soil and pavement testing around the garage and in backyards on Vernon Place found PCBs at levels greater than CT's soil standards for residences. The purpose of this fact sheet is to explain what the PCB contamination means for your health and give you easy actions you can take to reduce your contact with contaminated soil.



WHAT CAN I DO TO REDUCE MY CONTACT WITH SOIL IN MY YARD?

- ◆ Discourage children from playing in bare soil if possible, and make sure they wash their hands after playing outside, especially before eating.
- ◆ Use door mats to reduce tracked in dirt.
- ◆ Clean up dirt that is tracked into the house. Use a wet mop whenever you can because sweeping or vacuuming can stir up dust into the air.
- ◆ Pets can bring dirt inside on their paws or fur. Try to prevent pets from walking on bare soil in the yard or clean dirt off their paws or fur with a damp towel before they come inside.
- ◆ Wash toys before bringing them into the house, or leave them outside.
- ◆ If you have a vegetable garden, call the CT Department of Public Health (contact information on page 2) to get specific advice.



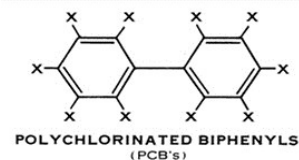
WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE EXPOSED?

In order to be exposed to chemicals in soil, you need to come into direct contact with soil that is contaminated and the chemicals need to get into your body. There are several ways you could be exposed to chemicals in soil in your yard:

- ◆ Ingestion
 - ⇒ Putting items into your mouth that have soil on them such as fingers, food, or toys.
 - ⇒ Eating food grown in contaminated soil that has not been completely washed or that has absorbed chemicals from the soil.
- ◆ Inhalation: breathing in soil dust
- ◆ Dermal: skin contact with soil

WHAT ARE PCBs?

Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) are mixtures of up to 209 individual chlorinated chemicals. They are man-made, not naturally occurring. PCBs have no taste or smell and range in consistency from an oil to a waxy solid. PCBs have been used as coolants and lubricants in transformers, capacitors, and other electrical equipment because they don't burn easily and are good insulators. The manufacture of PCBs in the U.S. was stopped in 1977 because it was discovered that they build up in the environment and can cause harmful health effects. Products made before 1977 that may contain PCBs include old fluorescent lighting fixtures, other electrical devices containing PCB capacitors, and hydraulic oils. PCBs are also found in building materials such as caulk and paint, like in the UConn parking garage.



WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL HEALTH EFFECTS FROM EXPOSURE TO PCBs?

The PCB levels found in backyard soil on Vernon Place are very unlikely to cause the health problems described below.

High levels of PCBs can result in skin conditions like rashes and acne, and liver damage. Studies of PCB workers have linked PCB exposure to liver cancer. Studies of women who ate a lot of PCB-contaminated fish while pregnant found that their children had some behavioral and immune effects. In animal studies, exposure to PCBs affects the immune system, reproductive system, gastrointestinal tract, and has resulted in acne-like skin conditions and some changes in behavior.

WHAT ACTIONS HAS UCONN TAKEN?

UConn is taking a number of actions to protect residents. Initial actions include notifying residents and property owners about the contamination, placing ground cover in backyards to prevent exposure to contaminated soil, and cleaning pavement where PCBs were found. UConn intends to remove soil and pavement that is contaminated above the PCB cleanup standard (1 part per million) and replace it with clean soil/pavement. In addition, the parking garage will be demolished and removed.



FOR MORE INFORMATION:



CT Department of Public Health Meg Harvey 860-509-7740 margaret.harvey@ct.gov www.ct.gov/dph	Stamford Health Department Jennifer Calder, Director 203-977-4396 jcalder@stamfordct.gov https://www.stamfordct.gov/department-of-health	CT Department of Energy & Environmental Protection 860-424-3486 gary.trombly@ct.gov www.ct.gov/deep	University of Connecticut Robert Corbett 860-486-7149 robert.corbett@uconn.edu
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