

- 1 Tips on PAHs.
- 2 PAHs, or polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, are a group of over 100 different chemicals formed during
3 the burning of organic substances such as coal, gasoline, wood, and tobacco. PAHs are also formed by
4 charbroiling or smoking food. Some PAHs are found in asphalt, coal-tar, creosote, and petroleum coke.
5 PAHs can contaminate soil, groundwater, and drinking water and accumulate in plants and animals.
- 6 Everyone is exposed to PAHs. Studies are ongoing to learn about the adverse health effects from acute
7 exposure to high levels of PAHs. Some PAHs, such as benzo(a)pyrene, are associated with bladder, lung,
8 and skin cancers. Chronic dermal exposure to benzo(a)pyrene has also been associated with warts and
9 the worsening of some skin conditions.
- 10 Urine tests for PAH metabolites have limited clinical use because the results cannot predict health
11 effects. However, elevated levels can confirm occupational exposure in some situations.
- 12 Treatment is primarily supportive, and ongoing exposure should be avoided or reduced when possible.
- 13 Counsel patients to avoid tobacco smoke and limit consumption of charbroiled or smoked foods.
- 14 Advise patients who work with PAHs that employers are responsible for informing them of their
15 workplace hazards, providing proper PPE, and ensuring that workspaces are well-ventilated. Counsel
16 these patients to use proper PPE and keep their work areas clean.
- 17 Consult a specialist in occupational and environmental medicine regarding a monitoring plan as needed.
- 18 Visit ATSDR's website to learn more.