

# URANIUM 101

## What is Uranium?

Uranium is a naturally occurring radioactive element. It is naturally present in nearly all rocks, soils, and air; can be redistributed in the environment through wind and water erosion.

Uranium is made up of three isotopes:

- Uranium-238 (Makes up >99% of natural uranium)
- Uranium-235
- Uranium-234

Depleted uranium contains very little U-235 or U-234.

U-235 is the fissionable isotope of uranium. Nuclear fuel is enriched with higher percentages of U-235 than the naturally occurring 0.7%.

## What you should know

In most areas of the United States, low levels of uranium are found in the drinking water. Higher levels may be found in areas with elevated levels of naturally occurring uranium in rocks and soil.

Most of the uranium you breathe or ingest is not absorbed and leaves the body as waste.

Neither the National Toxicology Program (NTP), the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) nor the EPA have classified natural uranium or depleted uranium with respect to carcinogenicity.

The EPA, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission all have made recommendations to protect our health regarding uranium.

Source: ATSDR/CDC