Aluminum Fact sheet

- Aluminum is present in the soil, water, and air; it is the third most common element in the earth's crust.
- Aluminum has a variety of uses in food, drugs, consumer products, and water treatment processes.
- Aluminum exposure happens every day on a regular basis, with the average adult taking in 9-14 milligrams of aluminum from aluminum-containing additives in food, food cooked with aluminum utensils or stored in aluminum packaging or aluminum coated drugs.
- Typically, exposure to aluminum from drinking water is low compared to food and drugs.
- Aluminum is found in consumer products such as antacids, astringents, buffered aspirin, food additives such as flour, baking powder, coloring agents, and anticaking agents, antiperspirants, and cosmetics.
- Foods naturally high in aluminum include potatoes, spinach, and tea; processed dairy products, flour, and infant formula if containing aluminum based additives
- Antacids contain approximately 104-208 mg of aluminum per tablet, capsule or 5 milliliter liquid dose. Buffered aspirin may contain 10-20 mg of aluminum per tablet.
- 132 gallons of water at the MCL, 0.20 mg/L, would need to be consumed to equal the amount of aluminum in one antacid
- 13.2 gallons of water at the MCL, 0.20 mg/L, would need to be consumed to equal the amount of aluminum in one buffered aspirin

How does Aluminum leave the body?

Most aluminum in food, water, and medicines leaves your body quickly in the feces. Much of the small amount of aluminum that does enter the bloodstream will quickly leave your body in the urine.

Why is Aluminum used in water treatment processes?

Aluminum compounds are used to coagulate or clump together harmful micro-organisms such as bacteria, viruses, and protozoa in order to remove them by sedimentation and filtration. These aluminum compounds also remove naturally occurring organic matter that lead to the formation of disinfection byproducts.

- The EPA has recommended a Secondary Maximum Contaminant Level (SMCL) of 0.20 mg/L for aluminum in drinking water. The SMCL is not based on levels that will affect humans or animals. It is based on taste, smell, or color.

For more information, call the CDC Information Center at 1-800-232-4636 or

visit online at www.atsdr.cdc.gov/