



## USDA Finds Arsenic In Chickens

The level of arsenic found in young chickens, which are called "broilers," may be three to four times higher than the amount of arsenic in other types of poultry and meat, HealthDayNews reports of a new study from researchers at the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service.

How is arsenic getting into chickens? **Arsenic is a government-approved feed supplement that farmers use as a way to fight intestinal parasites in the birds, especially young ones. This USDA study is the first of its kind to measure the levels of arsenic in chickens, as well as how much of it is ingested by people who eat those chickens.**

It's important to note that the USDA says that even with the higher levels of arsenic found in broilers, the amount of arsenic we ingest from our favorite chicken dishes is still well below what is considered a tolerable daily intake. But the researchers are equally quick to point out that the amount of arsenic we are ingesting from chicken is much higher than previously thought, which may prompt government agencies to reassess the acceptable level of total arsenic exposure.

Arsenic, while poisonous in large amounts in its inorganic form, is a naturally occurring organic element that is found in food, drinking water, and the environment. Arsenic in its less toxic organic form is used as a chicken feed supplement. Previous research has linked long-term exposure to arsenic in drinking water to cancer of the bladder, lungs, skin, kidney, nasal passages, liver, and prostate, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. HealthDayNews notes that it is also associated with cardiovascular, pulmonary, immunologic, neurologic, and endocrine problems. All of this means our total exposure to arsenic is an important measurement. A little is okay. A lot is not. "If we're taking in more [arsenic] in chicken, then there's, in a way, less room to take in arsenic through the water," lead study author and epidemiologist Tamar Lasky explained to HealthDayNews.

How much arsenic do you get from eating chicken? **If you ate 12 ounces of chicken every day, you would ingest between 21 micrograms and 31 micrograms of inorganic arsenic per day and 33 micrograms to 47 micrograms of total arsenic per day. Your weight is important in computing how much of that you can tolerate. If you weigh 154 pounds, this amount translates to 0.30 to 0.44 micrograms per kilogram per day of inorganic arsenic, which is well below the tolerable daily intake of 2 micrograms per kilogram per day, but still a sizable portion of the total, reports HealthDayNews.**

We Americans love chicken. It's a staple of our diet. To wit: In the last three decades, our per capita consumption of chicken has nearly doubled from an average of 40 pounds per year in 1970 to about 78 pounds a year by 2000, according to data from the National Chicken Council. The group's spokesman, Richard Lobb, told HealthDayNews that the USDA study "appears to be much ado about nothing." He points out that the arsenic in poultry feed is the less toxic organic form and that it "is used responsibly and safely by poultry producers."

The study is meant to raise questions for further research--not scare people away from eating chicken. Says Lasky, "It's reasonable for consumers to say, 'We want to know more about this.'"

The study findings were published in Environmental Health Perspectives.