



My property is contaminated – practical measures and advice on heavy metal and tar contamination

Many residential properties suffer from heavy metal and/or tar substance contamination. The contamination is caused by business activities (power plants, product trade, tar sites etc.), or by traffic and industry in surrounding areas.

It takes a long time to decompose tar substances, while heavy metals do not decompose. Both types of contamination are bound to the soil, thus the soil will remain contaminated. Usually, there are no visible signs of heavy metal or tar substance contamination.

Especially small children are more vulnerable towards contamination, as they dig into the soil and put the soil in their mouth.

To reduce, or totally to avoid, contact with contaminated soil, you should avoid or limit direct skin contact with the soil and avoid dust from the soil.

Children's play

Small children should not dig into contaminated soil due to the risk of skin contact and the children's tendency to put things in their mouth.

Use sandboxes with a solid bottom, and replace the sand once a year. By establishment of a digging area for the children, you should replace the contaminated soil with clean soil down to a half-meter depth. In addition, you should ensure to shield the area with a fence or similar.

Vegetable garden

Do not eat vegetables grown in contaminated soil. If you want to grow vegetables, you should grow the vegetables in clean soil, e.g. by replacing the soil down to a half-meter depth.

You can also grow vegetables in clean soil placed in pots, bowls, grow bags or plant containers.

If you eat vegetables grown in slightly contaminated soil, you should thoroughly peel and rinse the vegetables before consuming. You should also rinse berries before consuming, and you should avoid berries picked near the ground, as they are more highly exposed to soil dust. Remember to wear garden gloves and do not allow children access to the vegetable garden when the soil is contaminated. Apples, pears and other kind of fruits should also be thoroughly rinsed in order to remove all soil dust.

The garden

You can reduce contact to contaminated soil by way of a reasonable garden arrangement. Make sure to cover exposed soil with grass, bark chips, sand, gravel, grow bags or tiles. Make sure that the soil is constantly covered, and ensure to cover holes in the grass with new grass seed.

For further information about ground cover, tiled areas etc. we refer to plant nurseries and to the Danish Environmental Protection Agency's guide "Advising residents in slightly contaminated areas" (www.mst.dk - directory no. 7.2000, 5-12-00).

When you enter the house

You should clean your shoes, pants etc. before entering the house to avoid spread of soil to floors and carpets.

Make sure that both children and adults wash their hands after a visit to the garden.

Soil disposal

If you need to remove soil from your property, e.g. in connection with construction, please contact your municipality for further directions on soil disposal areas.



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Avoid

- to get soil/dust in the mouth
- direct skin contact with the soil
- soil dust

Remember

- to wash your hands after being outside
- to wipe your feet off
- to clean shoes and pants for soil/sand after being outside
- to wear gloves when working with contaminated soil

Children's play

- use sandboxes with a solid bottom, and replace the sand once a year
- replace the soil in digging areas
- ensure that the children wash their hands after being outside

Garden, cultivation of vegetables etc.

- cover exposed soil, e.g. with bark chips
- grow vegetables in clean soil, e.g. in plant containers
- thoroughly rinse and peel vegetables grown in slightly contaminated soil
- thoroughly rinse fruit and berries, and avoid fruit and berries near the ground

For further information about soil contamination: www.rn.dk/jordogvand

