

458 Heavy Metal Poisoning

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Toxic metals (hereafter referred to simply as “metals”) pose a significant threat to health through low-level as well as high level environmental and occupational exposures. One indication of their importance relative to other potential hazards is their ranking by the U.S. Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, which maintains an updated list of all hazards present in toxic waste sites according to their prevalence and the severity of their toxicity. The first, second, third, and seventh hazards on the list are heavy metals: arsenic, lead, mercury, and cadmium, respectively (<http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/spl/>). Specific information pertaining to each of these four metals, including sources and metabolism, toxic effects produced, diagnosis, and the appropriate treatment for poisoning, is summarized in **Table 458-1**.

TABLE 458-1 Heavy Metals