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Evaluation of the Health Risks of Embedded Depleted Uranium (DU) shrapnel on Pregnancy and Offspring Development

Authors: [Kimberly A. Benson](#); [HENRY M JACKSON FOUNDATION ROCKVILLE MD](#)

Abstract: Our laboratory is currently assessing the toxicity of embedded **depleted uranium** on the female rat This research is intended to answer questions that have arisen following Operation Desert Storm During this conflict a number of. U.S. military personnel were wounded by **depleted uranium** fragments. Many of these fragments were not removed because the removal procedure would produce excessive tissue damage. **Uranium** bioassays taken over a year after injury indicate that **uranium** was present in the urine well in excess of natural background up to 30 micro of urine. While no female soldiers currently have **depleted uranium** injuries, military roles are changing significantly and the female soldier flow plays a vital part in many combat scenarios and the potential exists for future DU injuries in the female soldiers. Although the toxicity of embedded **depleted uranium** is unknown, numerous studies have addressed the consequences of inhalation ingestion and parenteral administration of other forms of **uranium**. **Uranium** circulates in the blood as the uranylion, forming **uranium**-carbonate and **uranium**-albumin compiles. As the **uranium**-complexes passes through the kidney, it is filtered rapidly by the glomeruli where 60%-80% of absorbed **uranium** is excreted in the first 24 hour after acute exposure. The **uranium** that is not excreted is to absorbed by the proximal tubules where it produces significant toxic effects. **Uranium** also enters the bone, where it competes with calcium to for in complexes with phosphate ions, thus becoming part of the bone matrix. This bone matrix then serves as both a long- and short-term storage site from which **uranium** has been shown to be slowly released back into circulation. The liver, muscle and kidney are other major sites of **uranium** deposition, with a possible long-term storage mechanism in the kidney.

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