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Plutonium-239

National Cancer Institute

Source

National Cancer Institute. *Plutonium-239*. NCI Thesaurus. Code C29774.

An artificial radioactive element with long half-life, Plutonium-239 is produced by bombarding uranium-238 with slow neutrons and is used as the explosive in nuclear weapons and as fuel for nuclear reactors. Similar to uranium, Plutonium-239 is a heavy, fissionable metal that accumulates in bones upon exposure and presents health hazards. Plutonium oxidation results in stable, easily inhaled, particulate plutonium dioxide that represents a respiratory health hazard. Plutonium ingestion is considerably less dangerous since little is absorbed in the digestive system. (NCI04)