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**Selenium**

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

[Jump to navigation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#mw-head) [Jump to search](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#p-search)

This article is about the chemical element. For the software testing framework, see [Selenium (software)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium_(software)).

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| --- | --- |
| Selenium,  34Se | |
| [SeBlackRed.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:SeBlackRed.jpg) | |
| **General properties** | |
| **Pronunciation** | [/sɪˈliːniəm/](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help:IPA/English) ​([*sə-LEE-nee-əm*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help:Pronunciation_respelling_key)) |
| **Appearance** | black, red, and gray (not pictured) allotropes |
| [**Standard atomic weight**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Standard_atomic_weight) **(*A*r, standard)** | 78.971(8)[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-CIAAW2016-1) |
| **Selenium in the** [**periodic table**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Periodic_table) | |
| |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | 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[Neon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neon) | | [Sodium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sodium) | [Magnesium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magnesium) |  | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | [Aluminium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aluminium) | [Silicon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Silicon) | [Phosphorus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phosphorus) | [Sulfur](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sulfur) | [Chlorine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chlorine) | [Argon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Argon) | | [Potassium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Potassium) | [Calcium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Calcium) | [Scandium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scandium) |  | | | | | | | | | | | | | | [Titanium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Titanium) | [Vanadium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vanadium) | [Chromium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chromium) | [Manganese](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manganese) | [Iron](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iron) | [Cobalt](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cobalt) | [Nickel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nickel) | [Copper](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Copper) | [Zinc](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zinc) | [Gallium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gallium) | [Germanium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Germanium) | [Arsenic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arsenic) | Selenium | [Bromine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bromine) | [Krypton](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Krypton) | | [Rubidium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rubidium) | [Strontium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Strontium) | [Yttrium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yttrium) |  |  | | | | | | | | | | | | | [Zirconium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zirconium) | [Niobium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Niobium) | [Molybdenum](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Molybdenum) | [Technetium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Technetium) | [Ruthenium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ruthenium) | [Rhodium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rhodium) | [Palladium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palladium) | [Silver](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Silver) | [Cadmium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cadmium) | [Indium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indium) | [Tin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tin) | [Antimony](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antimony) | [Tellurium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tellurium) | [Iodine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iodine) | [Xenon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Xenon) | | [Caesium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caesium) | [Barium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barium) | [Lanthanum](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lanthanum) | [Cerium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cerium) | [Praseodymium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Praseodymium) | [Neodymium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neodymium) | [Promethium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Promethium) | [Samarium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samarium) | [Europium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Europium) | [Gadolinium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gadolinium) | [Terbium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Terbium) | [Dysprosium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dysprosium) | [Holmium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holmium) | [Erbium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erbium) | [Thulium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thulium) | [Ytterbium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ytterbium) | [Lutetium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lutetium) | [Hafnium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hafnium) | [Tantalum](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tantalum) | [Tungsten](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tungsten) | [Rhenium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rhenium) | [Osmium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Osmium) | [Iridium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iridium) | [Platinum](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Platinum) | [Gold](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gold) | [Mercury (element)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mercury_(element)) | [Thallium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thallium) | [Lead](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lead) | [Bismuth](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bismuth) | [Polonium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polonium) | [Astatine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Astatine) | [Radon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Radon) | | [Francium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francium) | [Radium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Radium) | [Actinium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Actinium) | [Thorium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thorium) | [Protactinium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protactinium) | [Uranium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uranium) | [Neptunium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neptunium) | [Plutonium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plutonium) | [Americium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Americium) | [Curium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Curium) | [Berkelium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Berkelium) | [Californium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Californium) | [Einsteinium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Einsteinium) | [Fermium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fermium) | [Mendelevium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mendelevium) | [Nobelium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nobelium) | [Lawrencium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lawrencium) | [Rutherfordium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rutherfordium) | [Dubnium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dubnium) | [Seaborgium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seaborgium) | [Bohrium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bohrium) | [Hassium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hassium) | [Meitnerium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meitnerium) | [Darmstadtium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Darmstadtium) | [Roentgenium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roentgenium) | [Copernicium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Copernicium) | [Nihonium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nihonium) | [Flerovium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flerovium) | [Moscovium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moscovium) | [Livermorium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Livermorium) | [Tennessine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tennessine) | [Oganesson](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oganesson) | | [S](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sulfur) ↑ **Se** ↓ [Te](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tellurium) | | [arsenic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arsenic) ← **selenium** → [bromine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bromine) | | | | |
| [**Atomic number**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atomic_number)(*Z*) | 34 |
| [**Group**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Group_(periodic_table)) | [group 16 (chalcogens)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chalcogen) |
| [**Period**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Period_(periodic_table)) | [period 4](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Period_(periodic_table)#Period_4) |
| [**Block**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Block_(periodic_table)) | [p-block](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/P-block) |
| [**Element category**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Names_for_sets_of_chemical_elements#Category) | [reactive nonmetal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reactive_nonmetal), sometimes considered a [metalloid](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metalloid) |
| [**Electron configuration**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Electron_configuration) | [[Ar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Argon)] 3d10 4s2 4p4 |
| Electrons per shell | 2, 8, 18, 6 |
| **Physical properties** | |
| [**Phase**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phase_(matter)) **at**[**STP**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Standard_conditions_for_temperature_and_pressure) | [solid](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Solid) |
| [**Melting point**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Melting_point) | 494 [K](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kelvin) ​(221 °C, ​430 °F) |
| [**Boiling point**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boiling_point) | 958 K ​(685 °C, ​1265 °F) |
| [**Density**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Density)(near r.t.) | gray: 4.81 g/cm3  alpha: 4.39 g/cm3  vitreous: 4.28 g/cm3 |
| when liquid (at m.p.) | 3.99 g/cm3 |
| [**Critical point**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Critical_point_(thermodynamics)) | 1766 K, 27.2 MPa |
| [**Heat of fusion**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Enthalpy_of_fusion) | gray: 6.69 [kJ/mol](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kilojoule_per_mole) |
| [**Heat of vaporization**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Enthalpy_of_vaporization) | 95.48 kJ/mol |
| [**Molar heat capacity**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Molar_heat_capacity) | 25.363 J/(mol·K) |
| [**Vapor pressure**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vapor_pressure)   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | ***P***(Pa) | **1** | **10** | **100** | **1 k** | **10 k** | **100 k** | | **at *T***(K) | 500 | 552 | 617 | 704 | 813 | 958 | | |
| **Atomic properties** | |
| [**Oxidation states**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oxidation_state) | **−2**, −1, +1,[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-2) **+2**, +3, **+4**, +5, **+6** (a strongly [acidic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acidic) oxide) |
| [**Electronegativity**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Electronegativity) | Pauling scale: 2.55 |
| [**Ionization energies**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ionization_energy) | * 1st: 941.0 kJ/mol * 2nd: 2045 kJ/mol * 3rd: 2973.7 kJ/mol |
| [**Atomic radius**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atomic_radius) | empirical: 120 [pm](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Picometre) |
| [**Covalent radius**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Covalent_radius) | 120±4 pm |
| [**Van der Waals radius**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Van_der_Waals_radius) | 190 pm |
| [Color lines in a spectral range](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Selenium_spectrum_visible.png)  [**Spectral lines**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spectral_line) **of selenium** | |
| **Other properties** | |
| [**Crystal structure**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crystal_structure) | ​[hexagonal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hexagonal_crystal_system)  [Hexagonal crystal structure for selenium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Hexagonal.svg) |
| [**Speed of sound**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Speed_of_sound)thin rod | 3350 m/s (at 20 °C) |
| [**Thermal expansion**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coefficient_of_thermal_expansion) | amorphous: 37 µm/(m·K) (at 25 °C) |
| [**Thermal conductivity**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thermal_conductivity) | amorphous: 0.519 W/(m·K) |
| [**Magnetic ordering**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magnetism) | [diamagnetic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diamagnetic)[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-3) |
| [**Magnetic susceptibility**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magnetic_susceptibility) | −25.0·10−6 cm3/mol (298 K)[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-4) |
| [**Young's modulus**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Young%27s_modulus) | 10 GPa |
| [**Shear modulus**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shear_modulus) | 3.7 GPa |
| [**Bulk modulus**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bulk_modulus) | 8.3 GPa |
| [**Poisson ratio**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poisson%27s_ratio) | 0.33 |
| [**Mohs hardness**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mohs_scale_of_mineral_hardness) | 2.0 |
| [**Brinell hardness**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brinell_hardness_test) | 736 MPa |
| [**CAS Number**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/CAS_Registry_Number) | 7782-49-2 |
| **History** | |
| **Naming** | after [Selene](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selene), Greek goddess of the moon |
| [**Discovery**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_chemical_element_discoveries) **and first isolation** | [Jöns Jakob Berzelius](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J%C3%B6ns_Jakob_Berzelius) and [Johann Gottlieb Gahn](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johann_Gottlieb_Gahn) (1817) |
| **Main** [**isotopes of selenium**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isotopes_of_selenium) | |
| |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | [**Iso­tope**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isotope) | [**Abun­dance**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Natural_abundance) | [**Half-life**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Half-life) **(*t*1/2)** | [**Decay mode**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Radioactive_decay) | [**Pro­duct**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Decay_product) | | **72Se** | [syn](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Synthetic_radioisotope) | 8.4 d | [ε](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Electron_capture) | [72As](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arsenic-72) | | [γ](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gamma_radiation) | – | | **74Se** | 0.86% | [stable](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stable_isotope) | | | | **75Se** | syn | 119.8 d | ε | [75As](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arsenic-75) | | γ | – | | **76Se** | 9.23% | stable | | | | **77Se** | 7.60% | stable | | | | **78Se** | 23.69% | stable | | | | **79Se** | [trace](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trace_radioisotope) | 3.27×105 y | [β−](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beta_decay) | [79Br](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bromine-79) | | **80Se** | 49.80% | stable | | | | **82Se** | 8.82% | 1.08×1020 y | [β−β−](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Double_beta_decay) | [82Kr](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Krypton-82) | | |
| * [view](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Template:Infobox_selenium) * [talk](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Template_talk:Infobox_selenium) * [edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Template:Infobox_selenium&action=edit)   | [references](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_data_references_for_chemical_elements) | |

**Selenium** is a [chemical element](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chemical_element) with symbol **Se** and [atomic number](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atomic_number) 34. It is a [nonmetal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nonmetal) (more rarely considered a [metalloid](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metalloid)) with properties that are intermediate between the elements above and below in the [periodic table](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Periodic_table), [sulfur](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sulfur) and [tellurium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tellurium), and also has similarities to [arsenic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arsenic). It rarely occurs in its elemental state or as pure ore compounds in the Earth's crust. Selenium (from [Ancient Greek](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Greek) σελήνη (selḗnē) "Moon") was discovered in 1817 by [Jöns Jacob Berzelius](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J%C3%B6ns_Jacob_Berzelius), who noted the similarity of the new element to the previously discovered [tellurium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tellurium) (named for the Earth).

Selenium is found in [metal sulfide ores](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Sulfide_minerals), where it partially replaces the sulfur. Commercially, selenium is produced as a byproduct in the refining of these ores, most often during production. Minerals that are pure selenide or selenate compounds are known but rare. The chief commercial uses for selenium today are [glassmaking](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glassmaking) and [pigments](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pigment). Selenium is a [semiconductor](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Semiconductor) and is used in [photocells](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Photocell). Applications in [electronics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Electronics), once important, have been mostly replaced with [silicon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Silicon) semiconductor devices. Selenium is still used in a few types of DC power [surge protectors](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Surge_protector) and one type of [fluorescent](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fluorescence) [quantum dot](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quantum_dot).

Selenium salts are toxic in large amounts, but trace amounts are necessary for cellular function in many organisms, including all animals. Selenium is an ingredient in many multivitamins and other dietary supplements, including [infant formula](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Infant_formula). It is a component of the antioxidant enzymes [glutathione peroxidase](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glutathione_peroxidase) and [thioredoxin reductase](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thioredoxin_reductase) (which indirectly reduce certain [oxidized](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Redox) molecules in animals and some plants). It is also found in three [deiodinase](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deiodinase) enzymes, which convert one [thyroid hormone](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thyroid_hormone) to another. Selenium requirements in plants differ by species, with some plants requiring relatively large amounts and others apparently requiring none.[[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-Ruyle-6)

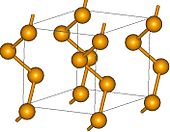


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**Characteristics**

**Physical properties**

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Selenium_trigonal.jpg)

Structure of hexagonal (gray) selenium

Selenium forms several [allotropes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Allotrope) that interconvert with temperature changes, depending somewhat on the rate of temperature change. When prepared in chemical reactions, selenium is usually an [amorphous](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amorphous_solid), brick-red powder. When rapidly melted, it forms the black, vitreous form, usually sold commercially as beads.[[7]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-house2008-7) The structure of black selenium is irregular and complex and consists of polymeric rings with up to 1000 atoms per ring. Black Se is a brittle, lustrous solid that is slightly soluble in [CS2](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carbon_disulfide). Upon heating, it softens at 50 °C and converts to gray selenium at 180 °C; the transformation temperature is reduced by presence of halogens and [amines](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amine).[[8]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-ge-8)

The red α, β, and γ forms are produced from solutions of black selenium by varying the evaporation rate of the solvent (usually CS2). They all have relatively low, [monoclinic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monoclinic) crystal symmetries and contain nearly identical puckered Se8 rings with different arrangements, as in [sulfur](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sulfur). The packing is most dense in the α form. In the Se8 rings, the Se-Se distance is 233.5 pm and Se-Se-Se angle is 105.7°. Other selenium allotropes may contain Se6 or Se7 rings.[[8]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-ge-8)

The most stable and dense form of selenium is gray and has a hexagonal crystal lattice consisting of helical polymeric chains, where the Se-Se distance is 237.3 pm and Se-Se-Se angle is 130.1°. The minimum distance between chains is 343.6 pm. Gray Se is formed by mild heating of other allotropes, by slow cooling of molten Se, or by condensing Se vapor just below the melting point. Whereas other Se forms are insulators, gray Se is a semiconductor showing appreciable [photoconductivity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Photoconductivity). Unlike the other allotropes, it is insoluble in CS2.[[8]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-ge-8) It resists oxidation by air and is not attacked by nonoxidizing [acids](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acids). With strong reducing agents, it forms polyselenides. Selenium does not exhibit the changes in viscosity that sulfur undergoes when gradually heated.[[7]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-house2008-7)[[9]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-9)

**Optical properties**

Owing to its use as a photoconductor in flat-panel x-ray detectors (see [below](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#Photoconductors)), the optical properties of amorphous selenium (α-Se) thin films have been the subject of intense research.[[10]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-Jafar2016-10)[[11]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-Saleh2017-11)[[12]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-Minkov2017-12)

**Isotopes**

Main article: [Isotopes of selenium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isotopes_of_selenium)

Selenium has seven natural [isotopes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isotope), including [79Se](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium-79), which occurs in minute quantities in [uranium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uranium) ores, as well as 23 other synthetic isotopes.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Selenium isotopes of greatest stability | | | |
| **Isotope** | **Nature** | **Origin** | **Half-life** |
| 74Se | Natural |  | Stable |
| 76Se | Natural |  | Stable |
| 77Se | Natural | Fission product | Stable |
| 78Se | Natural | Fission product | Stable |
| 79Se | Trace | Fission product | 327000 yr[[13]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-13)[[14]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-14) |
| 80Se | Natural | Fission product | Stable |
| 82Se | Natural | Fission product[[15]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-15) | ~1020 yr[[16]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-Audi-16) |

**Chemical compounds**

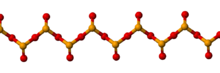
See also: [Category:Selenium compounds](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Selenium_compounds) and [organoselenium chemistry](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Organoselenium_chemistry)

Selenium compounds commonly exist in the [oxidation states](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oxidation_state) −2, +2, +4, and +6.

**Chalcogen compounds**

Selenium forms two [oxides](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oxide): [selenium dioxide](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium_dioxide) (SeO2) and [selenium trioxide](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium_trioxide) (SeO3). Selenium dioxide is formed by the reaction of elemental selenium with oxygen:[[7]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-house2008-7)

Se8 + 8 O2 → 8 SeO2

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Selenium-dioxide-chain-3D-balls.png)

Structure of the polymer SeO2: The (pyramidal) Se atoms are yellow.

It is a [polymeric](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polymer) solid that forms monomeric SeO2 molecules in the gas phase. It dissolves in water to form [selenous acid](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenous_acid), H2SeO3. Selenous acid can also be made directly by oxidizing elemental selenium with [nitric acid](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nitric_acid):[[17]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-wiberg_holleman-17)

3 Se + 4 HNO3 + H2O → 3 H2SeO3 + 4 NO

Unlike sulfur, which forms a stable [trioxide](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sulfur_trioxide), selenium trioxide is thermodynamically unstable and decomposes to the dioxide above 185 °C:[[7]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-house2008-7)[[17]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-wiberg_holleman-17)

2 SeO3 → 2 SeO2 + O2 (ΔH = −54 kJ/mol)

Selenium trioxide is produced in the laboratory by the reaction of [anhydrous](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anhydrous) [potassium selenate](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Potassium_selenate) (K2SeO4) and sulfur trioxide (SO3).[[18]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-18)

[Salts](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salt_(chemistry)) of selenous acid are called selenites. These include [silver selenite](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Silver_selenite) (Ag2SeO3) and [sodium selenite](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sodium_selenite) (Na2SeO3).

[Hydrogen sulfide](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hydrogen_sulfide) reacts with aqueous selenous acid to produce [selenium disulfide](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium_disulfide):

H2SeO3 + 2 H2S → SeS2 + 3 H2O

Selenium disulfide consists of 8-membered rings. It has an approximate composition of SeS2, with individual rings varying in composition, such as Se4S4 and Se2S6. Selenium disulfide has been used in shampoo as an anti[dandruff](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dandruff) agent, an inhibitor in polymer chemistry, a glass dye, and a reducing agent in [fireworks](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fireworks).[[17]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-wiberg_holleman-17)

Selenium trioxide may be synthesized by dehydrating [selenic acid](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenic_acid), H2SeO4, which is itself produced by the oxidation of selenium dioxide with [hydrogen peroxide](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hydrogen_peroxide):[[19]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-19)

SeO2 + H2O2 → H2SeO4

Hot, concentrated selenic acid can react with gold to form gold(III) selenate.[[20]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-20)

**Halogen compounds**

[Iodides](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iodide) of selenium are not well known. The only stable [chloride](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chloride) is [selenium monochloride](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium_monochloride) (Se2Cl2), which might be better known as selenium(I) chloride; the corresponding [bromide](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bromide) is also known. These species are structurally analogous to the corresponding [disulfur dichloride](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Disulfur_dichloride). Selenium dichloride is an important reagent in the preparation of selenium compounds (e.g. the preparation of Se7). It is prepared by treating selenium with [sulfuryl chloride](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sulfuryl_chloride) (SO2Cl2).[[21]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-21) Selenium reacts with [fluorine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fluorine) to form [selenium hexafluoride](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium_hexafluoride):

Se8 + 24 F2 → 8 SeF6

In comparison with its sulfur counterpart ([sulfur hexafluoride](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sulfur_hexafluoride)), [selenium hexafluoride](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium_hexafluoride) (SeF6) is more reactive and is a toxic [pulmonary](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pulmonary) irritant.[[22]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-22) Some of the selenium oxyhalides, such as [selenium oxyfluoride](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium_oxyfluoride) (SeOF2) and [selenium oxychloride](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium_oxychloride) (SeOCl2) have been used as specialty solvents.[[7]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-house2008-7)

**Selenides**

Analogous to the behavior of other chalcogens, selenium forms [hydrogen selenide](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hydrogen_selenide), H2Se. It is a strongly [odiferous](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/odiferous), toxic, and colorless gas. It is more acidic than H2S. In solution it ionizes to HSe−. The selenide dianion Se2− forms a variety of compounds, including the minerals from which selenium is obtained commercially. Illustrative selenides include [mercury selenide](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mercury_selenide) (HgSe), [lead selenide](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lead_selenide) (PbSe), [zinc selenide](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zinc_selenide) (ZnSe), and [copper indium gallium diselenide](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Copper_indium_gallium_diselenide) (Cu(Ga,In)Se2). These materials are [semiconductors](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Semiconductor). With highly electropositive metals, such as [aluminium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aluminium), these selenides are prone to hydrolysis:[[7]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-house2008-7)

Al2Se3 + 3 H2O → Al2O3 + 3 H2Se

Alkali metal selenides react with selenium to form polyselenides, Se2−  
n, which exist as chains.

**Other compounds**

Tetraselenium tetranitride, Se4N4, is an explosive orange compound analogous to [tetrasulfur tetranitride](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tetrasulfur_tetranitride) (S4N4).[[7]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-house2008-7)[[23]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-23)[[24]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-24) It can be synthesized by the reaction of [selenium tetrachloride](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium_tetrachloride) (SeCl4) with [[((CH  
3)  
3Si)  
2N]  
2Se](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metal_bis(trimethylsilyl)amides).[[25]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-25)

Selenium reacts with [cyanides](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cyanide) to yield [selenocyanates](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Potassium_selenocyanate):[[7]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-house2008-7)

8 KCN + Se8 → 8 KSeCN

**Organoselenium compounds**

Main article: [Organoselenium chemistry](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Organoselenium_chemistry)

Selenium, especially in the II oxidation state, forms stable bonds to [carbon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carbon), which are structurally analogous to the corresponding [organosulfur compounds](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Organosulfur_compounds). Especially common are selenides (R2Se, analogues of [thioethers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thioether)), diselenides (R2Se2, analogues of [disulfides](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Disulfide)), and [selenols](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenol) (RSeH, analogues of [thiols](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thiol)). Representatives of selenides, diselenides, and selenols include respectively [selenomethionine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenomethionine), [diphenyldiselenide](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diphenyldiselenide), and [benzeneselenol](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benzeneselenol). The [sulfoxide](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sulfoxide) in sulfur chemistry is represented in selenium chemistry by the selenoxides (formula RSe(O)R), which are intermediates in organic synthesis, as illustrated by the [selenoxide elimination](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenoxide_elimination) reaction. Consistent with trends indicated by the [double bond rule](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Double_bond_rule), selenoketones, R(C=Se)R, and selenaldehydes, R(C=Se)H, are rarely observed.[[26]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-26)

**History**

Selenium ([Greek](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek_language) σελήνη [*selene*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selene) meaning "Moon") was discovered in 1817 by [Jöns Jakob Berzelius](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J%C3%B6ns_Jakob_Berzelius) and [Johan Gottlieb Gahn](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johan_Gottlieb_Gahn).[[27]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-27) Both chemists owned a chemistry plant near [Gripsholm](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gripsholm), Sweden, producing [sulfuric acid](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sulfuric_acid) by the [lead chamber process](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lead_chamber_process). The pyrite from the [Falun mine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Copper_Mountain) created a red precipitate in the lead chambers which was presumed to be an arsenic compound, so the pyrite's use to make acid was discontinued. Berzelius and Gahn wanted to use the pyrite and they also observed that the red precipitate gave off a smell like [horseradish](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Horseradish) when burned. This smell was not typical of arsenic, but a similar odor was known from [tellurium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tellurium) compounds. Hence, Berzelius's first letter to [Alexander Marcet](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_Marcet) stated that this was a tellurium compound. However, the lack of tellurium compounds in the [Falun mine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Copper_Mountain) minerals eventually led Berzelius to reanalyze the red precipitate, and in 1818 he wrote a second letter to Marcet describing a newly found element similar to [sulfur](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sulfur) and tellurium. Because of its similarity to tellurium, named for the Earth, Berzelius named the new element after the [Moon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moon).[[28]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-28)[[29]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-29)

In 1873, [Willoughby Smith](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Willoughby_Smith) found that the electrical resistance of grey selenium was dependent on the ambient light.[[30]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-30) This led to its use as a cell for sensing light. The first commercial products using selenium were developed by [Werner Siemens](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Werner_Siemens) in the mid-1870s. The selenium cell was used in the [photophone](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Photophone) developed by [Alexander Graham Bell](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_Graham_Bell) in 1879. Selenium transmits an electric current proportional to the amount of light falling on its surface. This phenomenon was used in the design of [light meters](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Light_meter) and similar devices. Selenium's semiconductor properties found numerous other applications in electronics.[[31]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-31)[[32]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-32)[[33]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-33) The development of [selenium rectifiers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium_rectifier) began during the early 1930s, and these replaced [copper oxide](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Copper_oxide) rectifiers because they were more efficient.[[34]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-34)[[35]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-35)[[36]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-36) These lasted in commercial applications until the 1970s, following which they were replaced with less expensive and even more efficient [silicon rectifiers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Silicon_rectifier).

Selenium came to medical notice later because of its toxicity to [human beings](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_being) working in industries. Selenium was also recognized as an important veterinary toxin, which is seen in animals that have eaten high-selenium plants. In 1954, the first hints of specific biological functions of selenium were discovered in [microorganisms](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Microorganism) by biochemist, [Jane Pinsent](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jane_Gibson).[[37]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-37)[[38]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-38) It was discovered to be essential for mammalian life in 1957.[[39]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-39)[[40]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-40) In the 1970s, it was shown to be present in two independent sets of [enzymes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Enzyme). This was followed by the discovery of [selenocysteine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenocysteine) in proteins. During the 1980s, selenocysteine was shown to be encoded by the [codon UGA](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genetic_code). The recoding mechanism was worked out first in [bacteria](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bacteria) and then in [mammals](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mammal) (see [SECIS element](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SECIS_element)).[[41]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-41)

**Occurrence**

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Selenium_in_sandstone_Westwater_Canyon_Section_23_Mine_Grants,_New_Mexico.jpg)

Native selenium in sandstone, from a uranium mine near [Grants, New Mexico](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grants,_New_Mexico)

See also: [Category:Selenide minerals](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Selenide_minerals).

Native (i.e., elemental) selenium is a rare mineral, which does not usually form good crystals, but, when it does, they are steep rhombohedra or tiny acicular (hair-like) crystals.[[42]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-42) Isolation of selenium is often complicated by the presence of other compounds and elements.

Selenium occurs naturally in a number of inorganic forms, including [selenide](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenide), [selenate](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenate), and [selenite](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenite_(ion)), but these minerals are rare. The common mineral [selenite](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenite_(mineral)) is not a selenium mineral, and contains no [selenite ion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenite_(ion)), but is rather a type of [gypsum](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gypsum) (calcium sulfate hydrate) named like selenium for the moon well before the discovery of selenium. Selenium is most commonly found as an impurity, replacing a small part of the sulfur in sulfide ores of many metals.[[43]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-geosel1-43)[[44]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-geosel2-44)

In living systems, selenium is found in the amino acids [selenomethionine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenomethionine), [selenocysteine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenocysteine), and [methylselenocysteine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Methylselenocysteine). In these compounds, selenium plays a role analogous to that of sulfur. Another naturally occurring [organoselenium compound](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Organoselenium_compound) is dimethyl selenide.[[45]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-biol1-45)[[46]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-biol1a-46)

Certain solids are selenium-rich, and selenium can be [bioconcentrated](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bioaccumulation) by some plants. In soils, selenium most often occurs in soluble forms such as selenate (analogous to sulfate), which are leached into rivers very easily by runoff.[[43]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-geosel1-43)[[44]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-geosel2-44) Ocean water contains significant amounts of selenium.[[47]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-47)[[48]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-48)

Anthropogenic sources of selenium include coal burning, and the mining and smelting of sulfide ores.[[49]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-49)

**Production**

Selenium is most commonly produced from [selenide](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenide) in many [sulfide](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sulfide) [ores](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ore), such as those of [copper](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Copper), [nickel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nickel), or [lead](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lead). Electrolytic metal refining is particularly productive of selenium as a byproduct, obtained from the [anode](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anode) mud of copper refineries. Another source was the mud from the [lead chambers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lead_chamber_process) of [sulfuric acid](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sulfuric_acid) plants, a process that is no longer used. Selenium can be refined from these muds by a number of methods. However, most elemental selenium comes as a byproduct of [refining](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Refining_(metallurgy)) copper or producing [sulfuric acid](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sulfuric_acid).[[50]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-50)[[51]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-51) Since its invention, [solvent extraction and electrowinning](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Solvent_extraction_and_electrowinning) (SX/EW) production of copper produces an increasing share of the worldwide copper supply.[[52]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-52) This changes the availability of selenium because only a comparably small part of the selenium in the ore is leached with the copper.[[53]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-Naumov-53)

Industrial production of selenium usually involves the extraction of [selenium dioxide](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium_dioxide) from residues obtained during the purification of copper. Common production from the residue then begins by oxidation with [sodium carbonate](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sodium_carbonate) to produce selenium dioxide, which is mixed with water and [acidified](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acid) to form [selenous acid](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenous_acid) ([oxidation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oxidation) step). Selenous acid is bubbled with [sulfur dioxide](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sulfur_dioxide) ([reduction](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Redox) step) to give elemental selenium.[[54]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-54)[[55]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-55)

About 2,000 tonnes of selenium were produced in 2011 worldwide, mostly in Germany (650 t), Japan (630 t), Belgium (200 t), and Russia (140 t), and the total reserves were estimated at 93,000 tonnes. These data exclude two major producers, the United States and China. A previous sharp increase was observed in 2004 from 4–5 to $27/lb. The price was relatively stable during 2004–2010 at about US$30 per pound (in 100-pound lots) but increased to $65 /lb in 2011. The consumption in 2010 was divided as follows: metallurgy – 30%, glass manufacturing – 30%, agriculture – 10%, chemicals and pigments – 10%, and electronics – 10%. China is the dominant consumer of selenium at 1,500–2,000 tonnes/year.[[56]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-usgs-56)

**Applications**

**Manganese electrolysis**

During the [electro winning](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Electro_winning) of manganese, the addition of selenium dioxide decreases the power necessary to operate the [electrolysis cells](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Electrolytic_cell). China is the largest consumer of selenium dioxide for this purpose. For every tonne of manganese, an average 2 kg selenium oxide is used.[[56]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-usgs-56)[[57]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-57)

**Glass production**

The largest commercial use of Se, accounting for about 50% of consumption, is for the production of glass. Se compounds confer a red color to glass. This color cancels out the green or yellow tints that arise from iron impurities typical for most glass. For this purpose, various selenite and selenate salts are added. For other applications, a red color may be desired, produced by mixtures of CdSe and CdS.[[58]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-Ullmann-58)

**Alloys**

Selenium is used with [bismuth](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bismuth) in [brasses](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brass) to replace more toxic [lead](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lead). The regulation of lead in drinking water applications with the [Safe Drinking Water Act](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Safe_Drinking_Water_Act) of 1974 made a reduction of lead in brass necessary. The new brass is marketed under the name EnviroBrass.[[59]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-59) Like lead and sulfur, selenium improves the machinability of steel at concentrations around 0.15%.[[60]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-60)[[61]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-61) Selenium produces the same machinability improvement in copper alloys.[[62]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-62)

**Lithium–selenium batteries**

Lithium–selenium (Li–Se) battery is one of the most promising system for energy storage in the family of lithium batteries.[[63]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-63) Li–Se battery is an alternative to [Lithium–sulfur battery](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lithium%E2%80%93sulfur_battery) with an advantage of high electrical conductivity.

**Solar cells**

[Copper indium gallium selenide](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Copper_indium_gallium_selenide_solar_cell) is a material used in solar cells.[[64]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-64)

**Photoconductors**

Amorphous selenium (α-Se) thin films have found application as photoconductors in [flat panel x-ray detectors](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flat_panel_detector).[[65]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-Tan2006-65) These detectors utilize the amorphous selenium to capture and convert incident x-ray photons directly into electric charge.[[66]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-AGFA-66)

**Rectifiers**

Beginning from 1933 until the 1990s, Selenium was used for rectifiers, the such called [selenium rectifiers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium_rectifier).

**Other uses**

Small amounts of organoselenium compounds have been used to modify the catalysts used for the [vulcanization](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sulfur_vulcanization) for the production of rubber.[[53]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-Naumov-53)

The demand for selenium by the electronics industry is declining.[[56]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-usgs-56) Its [photovoltaic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Photovoltaics) and [photoconductive](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Photoconductivity) properties are still useful in [photocopying](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Photocopying),[[67]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-67)[[68]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-68)[[69]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-69)[[70]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-70) [photocells](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Photocell), [light meters](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Light_meter) and [solar cells](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Solar_cell). Its use as a photoconductor in plain-paper copiers once was a leading application, but in the 1980s, the photoconductor application declined (although it was still a large end-use) as more and more copiers switched to organic photoconductors. Though once widely used, [selenium rectifiers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium_rectifier) have mostly been replaced (or are being replaced) by silicon-based devices. The most notable exception is in power DC [surge protection](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Surge_protection), where the superior energy capabilities of selenium suppressors make them more desirable than [metal oxide varistors](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metal_oxide_varistor).

[Zinc selenide](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zinc_selenide) was the first material for blue [LEDs](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LED), but gallium nitride dominates that market.[[71]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-71) [Cadmium selenide](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cadmium_selenide) was an important component in [quantum dots](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quantum_dot). Sheets of amorphous selenium convert [X-ray](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/X-ray) images to patterns of charge in [xeroradiography](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Xeroradiography) and in solid-state, flat-panel X-ray cameras.[[72]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-72) Ionized selenium (Se+24) is one of the active mediums used in X-ray lasers.[[73]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-73)

Selenium is a catalyst in some chemical reactions, but it is not widely used because of issues with toxicity. In [X-ray crystallography](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/X-ray_crystallography), incorporation of one or more selenium atoms in place of sulfur helps with multiple-wavelength anomalous dispersion and [single wavelength anomalous dispersion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Single_wavelength_anomalous_dispersion) phasing.[[74]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-74)

Selenium is used in the [toning of photographic prints](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Photographic_print_toning), and it is sold as a toner by numerous photographic manufacturers. Selenium intensifies and extends the tonal range of black-and-white photographic images and improves the permanence of prints.[[75]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-75)[[76]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-76)[[77]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-77)

75Se is used as a gamma source in industrial radiography.[[78]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-78)

**Biological role**

Main article: [Selenium in biology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium_in_biology)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Elemental selenium | |
| **Hazards** | |
| [NFPA 704](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/NFPA_704) | NFPA 704 four-colored diamond  [0](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/NFPA_704#Red)  [2](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/NFPA_704#Blue)  [0](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/NFPA_704#Yellow) |

Although it is toxic in large doses, selenium is an essential [micronutrient](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Micronutrient) for animals. In plants, it occurs as a bystander mineral[[*clarification needed*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Please_clarify)], sometimes in toxic proportions in [forage](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Forage) (some plants may accumulate selenium as a defense against being eaten by animals, but other plants, such as [locoweed](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Locoweed), require selenium, and their growth indicates the presence of selenium in soil).[[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-Ruyle-6) See more on plant nutrition below.[[*clarification needed*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Please_clarify)]

Selenium is a component of the unusual [amino acids](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amino_acid) [selenocysteine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenocysteine) and [selenomethionine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenomethionine). In humans, selenium is a [trace element](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dietary_mineral) nutrient that functions as [cofactor](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cofactor_(biochemistry)) for [reduction](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Redox) of [antioxidant](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antioxidant) enzymes, such as [glutathione peroxidases](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glutathione_peroxidase)[[79]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-79) and certain forms of [thioredoxin reductase](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thioredoxin_reductase) found in animals and some plants (this enzyme occurs in all living organisms, but not all forms of it in plants require selenium).

The [glutathione peroxidase](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glutathione_peroxidase) family of enzymes (GSH-Px) catalyze certain reactions that remove reactive oxygen species such as [hydrogen peroxide](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hydrogen_peroxide) and organic [hydroperoxides](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hydroperoxide):

2 GSH + H2O2----GSH-Px → GSSG + 2 H2O

The thyroid gland and every cell that uses thyroid hormone use selenium, which is a cofactor for the three of the four known types of [thyroid hormone](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thyroid_hormone) [deiodinases](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deiodinase), which activate and then deactivate various thyroid hormones and their metabolites; the [iodothyronine deiodinases](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iodothyronine_deiodinase) are the subfamily of deiodinase enzymes that use selenium as the otherwise rare amino acid selenocysteine. (Only the deiodinase, [iodotyrosine deiodinase](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iodotyrosine_deiodinase), which works on the last breakdown products of thyroid hormone, does not use selenium.)[[80]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-80)

Selenium may inhibit [Hashimoto's disease](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hashimoto%27s_thyroiditis), in which the body's own thyroid cells are attacked as alien. A reduction of 21% on TPO antibodies is reported with the dietary intake of 0.2 mg of selenium.[[81]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-81)

Increased dietary selenium reduces the effects of mercury toxicity,[[82]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-82)[[83]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-83)[[84]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-84) although it is effective only at low to modest doses of mercury.[[85]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-85) Evidence suggests that the molecular mechanisms of mercury toxicity includes the irreversible inhibition of selenoenzymes that are required to prevent and reverse oxidative damage in brain and endocrine tissues.[[86]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-86)[[87]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-87) An antioxidant, selenoneine, which is derived from selenium and has been found to be present in the blood of bluefin tuna, is the subject of scientific research regarding its possible roles in inflammatory and chronic diseases, methylmercury detoxification, and oxidative damages.[[88]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-88)[[89]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-89)

**Evolution in biology**

Main article: [Evolution of dietary antioxidants](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evolution_of_dietary_antioxidants)

From about three billion years ago, prokaryotic selenoprotein families drive the evolution of selenocysteine, an amino acid. Selenium is incorporated into several prokaryotic selenoprotein families in bacteria, archaea, and eukaryotes as selenocysteine,[[90]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-glady-90) where selenoprotein peroxiredoxins protect bacterial and eukaryotic cells against oxidative damage. Selenoprotein families of GSH-Px and the deiodinases of eukaryotic cells seem to have a bacterial [phylogenetic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phylogenetics) origin. The selenocysteine-containing form occurs in species as diverse as green algae, diatoms, sea urchins, fish, and chickens. Selenium enzymes are involved in the small reducing molecules [glutathione](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glutathione) and [thioredoxin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thioredoxin). One family of selenium-bearing molecules (the [glutathione peroxidases](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glutathione_peroxidase)) destroys peroxide and repairs damaged peroxidized cell membranes, using glutathione. Another selenium-bearing enzyme in some plants and in animals ([thioredoxin reductase](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thioredoxin_reductase)) generates reduced thioredoxin, a dithiol that serves as an electron source for peroxidases and also the important reducing enzyme [ribonucleotide reductase](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ribonucleotide_reductase) that makes DNA precursors from RNA precursors.[[91]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-91)

Trace elements involved in GSH-Px and superoxide dismutase enzymes activities, i.e. selenium, [vanadium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vanadium), [magnesium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magnesium), [copper](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Copper), and [zinc](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zinc), may have been lacking in some terrestrial mineral-deficient areas.[[90]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-glady-90) Marine organisms retained and sometimes expanded their selenoproteomes, whereas the selenoproteomes of some terrestrial organisms were reduced or completely lost. These findings suggest that, with the exception of [vertebrates](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vertebrate), aquatic life supports selenium use, whereas terrestrial habitats lead to reduced use of this trace element.[[92]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-92) Marine fishes and vertebrate thyroid glands have the highest concentration of selenium and iodine. From about 500 million years ago, freshwater and terrestrial plants slowly optimized the production of "new" endogenous antioxidants such as [ascorbic acid](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ascorbic_acid) (vitamin C), [polyphenols](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polyphenol) (including flavonoids), [tocopherols](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tocopherol), etc. A few of these appeared more recently, in the last 50–200 million years, in fruits and flowers of angiosperm plants. In fact, the angiosperms (the dominant type of plant today) and most of their antioxidant pigments evolved during the late [Jurassic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jurassic) period.[[*citation needed*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Citation_needed)]

The deiodinase [isoenzymes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isozyme) constitute another family of eukaryotic selenoproteins with identified enzyme function. Deiodinases are able to extract electrons from iodides, and iodides from iodothyronines. They are, thus, involved in thyroid-hormone regulation, participating in the protection of [thyrocytes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thyroid_epithelial_cell) from damage by H2O2 produced for thyroid-hormone biosynthesis.[[93]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-93) About 200 million years ago, new selenoproteins were developed as mammalian GSH-Px enzymes.[[94]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-94)[[95]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-95)[[96]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-96)[[97]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-97)

**Nutritional sources of selenium**

Dietary selenium comes from nuts, cereals and mushrooms. [Brazil nuts](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brazil_nut) are the richest dietary source (though this is soil-dependent, since the Brazil nut does not require high levels of the element for its own needs).[[98]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-98)[[99]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-99)

The U.S. [Recommended Dietary Allowance](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Recommended_Dietary_Allowance) (RDA) for teenagers and adults is 55 µg/day. Selenium as a dietary supplement is available in many forms, including multi-vitamins/mineral supplements, which typically contain 55 or 70 µg/serving. Selenium-specific supplements typically contain either 100 or 200 µg/serving.

In June 2015 the U.S. [Food and Drug Administration](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Food_and_Drug_Administration) (FDA) published its final rule establishing the requirement of minimum and maximum levels of selenium in [infant formula](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Infant_formula).[[100]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-100)

The selenium content in the human body is believed to be in the 13–20 milligram range.[[101]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-101)

**Indicator plant species**

Certain species of plants are considered indicators of high selenium content of the soil because they require high levels of selenium to thrive. The main selenium indicator plants are [*Astragalus*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Astragalus) species (including some [locoweeds](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Locoweed)), prince's plume ([*Stanleya*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stanleya_(plant)) sp.), woody asters ([*Xylorhiza*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Xylorhiza) sp.), and false goldenweed ([*Oonopsis*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oonopsis) sp.)[[102]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-102)

**Detection in biological fluids**

Selenium may be measured in blood, plasma, serum, or urine to monitor excessive environmental or occupational exposure, to confirm a diagnosis of poisoning in hospitalized victims, or investigate a suspected case of fatal overdose. Some analytical techniques are capable of distinguishing organic from inorganic forms of the element. Both organic and inorganic forms of selenium are largely converted to monosaccharide conjugates (selenosugars) in the body prior elimination in the urine. Cancer patients receiving daily oral doses of selenothionine may achieve very high plasma and urine selenium concentrations.[[103]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-103)

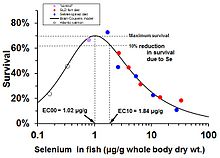
**Toxicity**

Although selenium is an essential [trace element](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dietary_mineral), it is toxic if taken in excess. Exceeding the [Tolerable Upper Intake Level](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dietary_Reference_Intake) of 400 micrograms per day can lead to selenosis.[[104]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-104) This 400 [µg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Microgram) Tolerable Upper Intake Level is based primarily on a 1986 study of five Chinese patients who exhibited overt signs of selenosis and a follow up study on the same five people in 1992.[[105]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-105) The 1992 study actually found the maximum safe dietary Se intake to be approximately 800 micrograms per day (15 micrograms per kilogram body weight), but suggested 400 micrograms per day to avoid creating an imbalance of nutrients in the diet and to accord with data from other countries.[[106]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-106) In China, people who ingested corn grown in extremely selenium-rich stony coal (carbonaceous [shale](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shale)) have suffered from selenium toxicity. This coal was shown to have selenium content as high as 9.1%, the highest concentration in coal ever recorded.[[107]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-107)

Signs and symptoms of selenosis include a garlic odor on the breath, gastrointestinal disorders, hair loss, [sloughing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sloughing) of nails, fatigue, irritability, and neurological damage. Extreme cases of selenosis can exhibit [cirrhosis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cirrhosis) of the liver, [pulmonary edema](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pulmonary_edema), or death.[[108]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-108) Elemental selenium and most metallic [selenides](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenide) have relatively low toxicities because of low [bioavailability](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bioavailability). By contrast, [selenates](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenate) and [selenites](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenite_(ion)) have an oxidant mode of action similar to that of arsenic trioxide and are very toxic. The chronic toxic dose of selenite for humans is about 2400 to 3000 micrograms of selenium per day.[[109]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-109) [Hydrogen selenide](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hydrogen_selenide) is an extremely toxic, corrosive gas.[[110]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-110) Selenium also occurs in organic compounds, such as dimethyl selenide, [selenomethionine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenomethionine), [selenocysteine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenocysteine) and [methylselenocysteine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Methylselenocysteine), all of which have high [bioavailability](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bioavailability) and are toxic in large doses.

On 19 April 2009, 21 [polo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polo) ponies died shortly before a match in the United States Polo Open. Three days later, a pharmacy released a statement explaining that the horses had received an incorrect dose of one of the ingredients used in a vitamin/mineral supplement compound that had been incorrectly prepared by a [compounding pharmacy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Compounding_pharmacy). Analysis of blood levels of [inorganic compounds](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inorganic_compound) in the supplement indicated the selenium concentrations were ten to fifteen times higher than normal in the [blood samples](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blood_sample), and 15 to 20 times higher than normal in the liver samples. Selenium was later confirmed to be the toxic factor.[[111]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-111)

[Selenium poisoning](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium_Pollution) of water systems may result whenever new agricultural runoff courses through normally dry, undeveloped lands. This process leaches natural soluble selenium compounds (such as selenates) into the water, which may then be concentrated in new "wetlands" as the water evaporates. Selenium pollution of waterways also occurs when selenium is leached from coal flue ash, mining and metal smelting, crude oil processing, and landfill.[[112]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-112) The resultant high selenium levels in waterways were found to cause congenital disorders in oviparous species, including wetland birds[[113]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-113) and fish.[[114]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-114) Elevated dietary methylmercury levels can amplify the harm of selenium toxicity in oviparous species.[[115]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-115)[[116]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-116)

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Se_dose-response_curve_for_juvenile_salmon_mortality_-_percent_scale.jpg)

Relationship between survival of juvenile salmon and concentration of selenium in their tissues after 90 days (Chinook salmon[[117]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-Hamilton-117)) or 45 days (Atlantic salmon[[118]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-Poston-118)) exposure to dietary selenium. The 10% lethality level (LC10=1.84 µg/g) was derived by applying the biphasic model of Brain and Cousens[[119]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-119) to only the Chinook salmon data. The Chinook salmon data comprise two series of dietary treatments, combined here because the effects on survival are indistinguishable.

In fish and other wildlife, selenium is necessary for life, but toxic in high doses. For salmon, the optimal concentration of selenium is about 1 microgram selenium per gram of whole body weight. Much below that level, young salmon die from deficiency;[[118]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-Poston-118) much above, they die from toxic excess.[[117]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-Hamilton-117)

The [Occupational Safety and Health Administration](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Occupational_Safety_and_Health_Administration) (OSHA) has set the legal limit ([Permissible exposure limit](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Permissible_exposure_limit)) for selenium in the workplace at 0.2 mg/m3 over an 8-hour workday. The [National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Institute_for_Occupational_Safety_and_Health) (NIOSH) has set a [Recommended exposure limit](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Recommended_exposure_limit) (REL) of 0.2 mg/m3 over an 8-hour workday. At levels of 1 mg/m3, selenium is [immediately dangerous to life and health](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/IDLH).[[120]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-120)

**Deficiency**

Main article: [Selenium deficiency](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium_deficiency)

Selenium deficiency can occur in patients with severely compromised [intestinal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intestine) function, those undergoing [total parenteral nutrition](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Total_parenteral_nutrition), and[[121]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-121) in those of advanced age (over 90). Also, people dependent on food grown from selenium-deficient soil are at risk. Although [New Zealand](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Zealand) soil has low levels of selenium, adverse health effects have not been detected in the residents.[[122]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-122)

Selenium deficiency, defined by low (<60% of normal) selenoenzyme activity levels in brain and endocrine tissues, occurs only when a low selenium level is linked with an additional stress, such as high exposures to mercury[[123]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-123) or increased oxidant stress from vitamin E deficiency.[[124]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-124)

Selenium interacts with other nutrients, such as [iodine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iodine) and [vitamin E](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vitamin_E). The effect of selenium deficiency on health remains uncertain, particularly in relation to [Kashin-Beck disease](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kashin-Beck_disease).[[125]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-125) Also, selenium interacts with other minerals, such as [zinc](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zinc) and [copper](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Copper). High doses of Se supplements in pregnant animals might disturb the Zn:Cu ratio and lead to Zn reduction; in such treatment cases, Zn levels should be monitored. Further studies are needed to confirm these interactions.[[126]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-126)

In the regions (e.g. various regions within North America) where low selenium soil levels lead to low concentrations in the plants, some animal species may be deficient unless selenium is supplemented with diet or injection.[[127]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-127) [Ruminants](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ruminant) are particularly susceptible. In general, absorption of dietary selenium is lower in ruminants than other animals, and is lower from forages than from grain.[[128]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-NRCsr2007-128) Ruminants grazing certain forages, e.g., some [white clover](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_clover) varieties containing [cyanogenic glycosides](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cyanogenic_glycoside), may have higher selenium requirements,[[128]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-NRCsr2007-128) presumably because cyanide is released from the [aglycone](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aglycone) by [glucosidase](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glucosidase) activity in the rumen[[129]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-129) and glutathione peroxidases is deactivated by the cyanide acting on the glutathione [moiety](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moiety_(chemistry)).[[130]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-130) Neonate ruminants at risk of [white muscle disease](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nutritional_muscular_dystrophy) may be administered both selenium and vitamin E by injection; some of the WMD [myopathies](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Myopathy) respond only to selenium, some only to vitamin E, and some to either.[[131]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-131)

**Controversial health effects**

Main article: [Selenium in biology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium_in_biology)

A number of correlative epidemiological studies have implicated selenium deficiency (measured by blood levels) in a number of serious or chronic diseases, such as cancer,[[132]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-jn.nutrition-132)[[133]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-133) [diabetes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diabetes),[[132]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-jn.nutrition-132) [HIV/AIDS](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HIV/AIDS),[[134]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-134) and [tuberculosis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tuberculosis). In addition, selenium supplementation has been found to be a chemopreventive for some types of cancer in some types of rodents. One study of 118 exocrine pancreatic cancer (EPC) patients and 399 hospital controls in eastern Spain found high selenium concentrations to be inversely associated with the risk of EPC.[[135]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-135) In [randomized, blinded, controlled prospective trials](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Randomized_controlled_trial) in humans, selenium supplementation has not succeeded in reducing the incidence of any disease, nor has a [meta-analysis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meta-analysis) of such selenium supplementation studies detected a decrease in overall mortality.[[136]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-136) However, selenium supplementation may be beneficial in cancer patients receiving [radiotherapy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Radiotherapy).[[137]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium#cite_note-137)

**See also**

* [ACES (nutritional supplement)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ACES_(nutritional_supplement))
* [Abundance of elements in Earth's crust](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abundance_of_elements_in_Earth%27s_crust)
* [Selenium yeast](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selenium_yeast)
* [Selene](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selene)

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**Selenium**at Wikipedia's [sister projects](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Wikimedia_sister_projects)

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* [ATSDR – Toxicological Profile: Selenium](http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxprofiles/tp92.html)
* [CDC - NIOSH Pocket Guide to Chemical Hazards](https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/npg/npgd0550.html)
* [Peter van der Krogt elements site](http://elements.vanderkrogt.net/element.php?sym=Se)

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