

Falconbridge residents not at risk

*Study shows arsenic
levels normal*

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Most residents of Falconbridge had anxieties about being exposed to arsenic alleviated last night at a meeting held in the community centre.

Residents were informed the community does not have a higher exposure rate than Hanmer, and they do not face greater health effects from arsenic exposure, said study director, Dr. Celine Pinsent.

But five percent of those sampled did show elevated levels of arsenic in urine samples.

Two residents of 700 sampled showed very high levels. Those with elevated levels were advised to see their doctors immediately, said Pinsent.

The arsenic testing is part of the overall Sudbury Soils Study, charged with measuring air, water and soil contamination from past mining practices in the area.

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Falconbridge residents were tested against a comparison group in Hanmer, which had lower levels of arsenic in their soil. Tests of arsenic in urine samples for Falconbridge and Hanmer residents were similar despite differences in arsenic levels in soils from both.

Pinsent said the reason for the lower than expected levels in urine samples is that arsenic from contaminated soils is not easily absorbed by the body.

"If the arsenic is in the water, then it is far more of a problem because the body can absorb it easier. Water in the area was already tested by the main Sudbury Soils Study and levels of arsenic were found to be acceptable," she said.