

# Beta Particle Encyclopedia Article

## Beta Particle

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# Beta Particle

An electron emitted by the nucleus of a radioactive atom. The beta particle is produced when a **neutron** within the nucleus decays into a proton and an electron. Beta particles have greater penetrating power than alpha particles but less than x-ray or gamma rays. Although beta particles can penetrate skin, they travel only a short distance in tissue. Beta rays pose relatively little health hazard, therefore, unless they are ingested into the body. Naturally radioactive materials such as potassium-40, carbon-14, and strontium-90 emit beta particles, as do a number of synthetic radioactive materials.

## See Also

Radioactivity