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# HELLO CHILDREN!

## Where does helium come from?



On the Earth, helium comes from natural gas deposits in the atmosphere. The atmosphere contains about 5 parts of helium per million parts of air. Helium is a lightweight gas and chemical element and makes up only a small fraction of the Earth's matter. But it is one of the most common elements in the universe. The Sun and other stars are made mostly of helium and hydrogen. The energy of these stars is produced when hydrogen atoms join together to form helium atoms.

Because helium is so light, it constantly escapes from the atmosphere and drifts into space. But the lost helium is replaced by radioactive minerals that shoot out alpha particles. Helium is also used to fill scientific balloons. The balloons rise to high altitudes, because helium is lighter than air. In air, helium has 92 per cent of the lifting ability of hydrogen. It is safer than hydrogen because it will not burn, as hydrogen will.



### FACT FILE

Divers sometimes breathe a mixture of helium and oxygen to avoid a painful illness called nitrogen narcosis. Nitrogen narcosis usually occurs at depths below 30 metres (100 feet).

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