

Protect Yourself From Mercury!

WHAT IS SO BAD ABOUT MERCURY?

Mercury is a naturally occurring element, but is highly toxic, resists breaking down in the environment, and accumulates in the food chain.

Mercury can permanently affect fetal and child development and can damage the brain, kidneys, and lungs.

WHAT ARE OTHER MAJOR SOURCES OF MERCURY POLLUTION?

Mercury is released through coal-burning energy production, some industrial processes, abandoned mines, garbage incineration, improper disposal, and accidental spills. Rain carries it from the air to the watershed where it can accumulate in the food chain, affecting certain types of fish.

HOW DOES MERCURY GET INTO MY BODY?

People are most commonly exposed to mercury by eating mercury-contaminated fish. Women who may become pregnant, pregnant women, and children are most susceptible and should be cautious of eating more than one fish meal from any source in a week. Certain kinds of large ocean fish should not be eaten at all, as well as some Oregon freshwater fish. See Oregon Fish Health Advisories in the **RESOURCES** section on the other side.

Other routes of exposure are from breakage of mercury-containing devices such as mercury thermometers or fluorescent tubes.



OTHER PRODUCTS THAT MAY CONTAIN MERCURY:

- Button cell batteries
- Fluorescent light tubes
- Old paint (pre-1990)
- Thermostats
- Pesticides
- Barometers
- Blood pressure cuffs
- Art supplies/chemistry sets
- Tilt switches (silent light switches)
- Contact lens solution with "thimerosal"
- Antiseptic solution with "thimerosal" or "merbromin" (such as mercurichrome)

HOW CAN I HELP?

You can:

1. Substitute mercury-containing products with mercury-free products.
2. Dispose of mercury-containing products at a household hazardous waste collection event or facility.
3. Practice energy efficiency to help reduce demand for coal-fired energy.

RESOURCES

For questions regarding household hazardous waste (HHW) disposal or events, contact the HHW Hotline: 800-732-9253, or www.deq.state.or.us/wmc/solwaste/hhw.html

Fish Health advisories:

Oregon Health Division, 503-731-4015 or www.ohd.hr.state.or.us/esc/fishadv.htm

US Food and Drug Administration:

www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/hgpdfdoc.html

Who to contact if you spill mercury:

less than 2 tablespoons -

Oregon Poison Center, 1-800-222-1222, or dial 911

Oregon Health Division, 503-731-4025

more than 2 tablespoons -

Oregon Emergency Response System, 1-800-452-0311

