



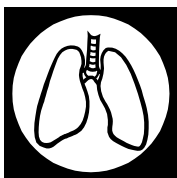
Mercury and Health

Mercury is a naturally occurring metal. It has several forms. Metallic mercury is a shiny, silver-white liquid with no smell. When mercury is heated, it is a colorless gas with no smell.

Mercury can get in to our bodies from things we eat, air we breathe, and through our skin. Eating fish that has mercury in it is one way people take in mercury. When mercury is spilled, some of it may be in the air. We can breathe in those vapors. Mercury can also absorb through our skin. If you think you have been exposed to mercury, call your doctor.

Exposure to high levels of mercury can:

- Damage the brain
- Hurt your kidneys
- Damage your lungs
- Cause death



Brain damage from mercury can cause:

- Irritability
- Tremors
- Loss of appetite and weight
- Changes in vision or hearing
- Memory problems



Short term exposure to high levels of mercury vapor can cause:

- Coughing
- Chest pain
- Increased heart rate
- Increased blood pressure
- Shortness of breath
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Skin rashes
- Eye irritation



Mercury can pass from a pregnant woman to her unborn child. Fetuses and young children are most at risk from mercury.



References:

National Library of Medicine, "Tox Town: Mercury," toxtown.nlm.nih.gov. Accessed September 2004.
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 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, "Mercury: Human Health," www.epa.gov/mercury. Accessed September 2004.

Written by Kimberly B. Henken, M.S., University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service; Jorge Atilas, Ph.D., The University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Service; and Lisa Ann McKinley, M.S., The University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Service.

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