

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 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 freshwater fish. See Oregon fish advisories and consumption guidelines 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:

- Coin and 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 "thiomersal"
- Antiseptic solution with "thiomersal" 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

Household hazardous waste disposal:

<https://ordeq.org/hhw>

Fish advisories and consumption guidelines:

Oregon Health Authority, 877-290-6767

<https://ordeq.org/oha-fish>

Who to contact if you spill mercury:

- If it's less than 2 tablespoons, call the Oregon Poison Center, 800-222-1222 or dial 911
- If it's more than 2 tablespoons - Don't attempt to clean it up by yourself. Call the Oregon Emergency Response System, 800-452-0311
- Learn more:
<https://ordeq.org/mercury>

