

Mercury Fact Sheet

Mercury is a metal that is found in nature. It is released into the environment when coal is burned, by some industries, and from past use in gold mines. Mercury builds up in certain types of fish.

Mercury is found in

- Certain types of fish and seafood. This is the most common source of exposure to mercury.
- Some imported face creams used for skin lightening, anti-aging, or acne.
- Silver-colored dental fillings.
- Glass thermometers, older barometers, and blood pressure gauges.
- Fluorescent lights, including compact fluorescent light (CFL) bulbs.

Possible health concerns

Mercury:

- Can affect brain development and cause learning and behavior problems in infants and children who were exposed in the womb.
- Can harm the nervous system and kidneys.
- May affect the heart.
- May increase cancer risk.

Possible ways to reduce exposure

- Choose fish that are lower in mercury, such as salmon, tilapia, trout, canned light tuna, sardines, anchovies, and oysters.
- Avoid fish that are high in mercury, such as shark, swordfish, orange roughy, bluefin, and bigeye tuna.
- Do not use imported skin lightening, acne treatment, or anti-aging creams unless you are certain that they do not contain mercury.
- Properly recycle CFL bulbs (see below).
- Properly clean up broken thermometers, CFL bulbs, and other items containing mercury (see below). Do not let children play with silver liquid from items like mercury thermometers.

For more information:

Information on mercury for people who catch and eat fish: <http://oehha.ca.gov/fish/mercury-fish-information-people-who-eat-fish>
or call OEHHA at (916) 327-7319 or (510) 622-3170.

Guide for choosing fish that are lower in mercury: <http://oehha.ca.gov/media/downloads/fish/fact-sheet/2011commfishguidecolor.pdf>

Concerns about mercury exposure – contact the California Poison Control System hotline: www.calpoison.org/home.html or 1-800-222-1222.

Cleaning up mercury spills, such as from broken thermometers or CFL bulbs: www.epa.gov/mercury/spills

For CFL recycling location: Visit <http://recyclenation.com/> and enter “Compact Fluorescent Lights” and your zip code in the search box; or call 1-800-732-9254.