

Mercury Poisoning

Mercury is not harmful in accidental ingestions or exposures to the skin but is dangerous when vaporized.

- Elemental mercury can be found in:
 - Glass thermometers
 - Electrical switches
 - Fluorescent light bulbs
 - Older dental fillings
 - Some medical equipment
- Inorganic mercury can found in:
 - Batteries
 - Chemistry labs
 - Some disinfectants
 - Folk culture medicines
 - Red cinnabar mineral
- Organic mercury can be found in:
 - Thimerosal
 - Fumes from burning coal
 - Fish that have eaten a form of organic mercury

In the United States, if exposed to mercury, most comes in the form of organic mercury found in fish. To enjoy the benefits of eating fish while minimizing exposure to mercury, you should eat mainly types of fish low in mercury and also limit your consumption of types of fish with typically higher levels of mercury; if pregnant talk with your doctor before consuming fish. For fetus, infants and children there is a high risk for neurological impairment if exposed to excess amounts of mercury.

Compact Fluorescent Lights (CFLs) contain mercury and should be handled with care. If a CFL bulb breaks, use cardboard or other stiff paper to carefully scoop the fragments and powder into a sealed plastic bag. Double bag the particles and put them in the trash outside. Wash your hands with soap and water when you are finished.

Spilled mercury is difficult to find and clean because it separates into tiny beads. If mercury is spilled, use a flashlight by holding it close to the floor to find all of the particles.

Do not use a vacuum cleaner to clean up spilled mercury. Use duct tape, a dropper, or a damp paper towel to pick up the particles. Discard the mercury by putting it in a double plastic bag and throwing it away in the trash. Wash your hands with soap and water when you are finished.

Allow the area to ventilate well before re-entering.

Call Carolinas Poison Center at [1-800-222-1222](tel:1-800-222-1222) for more information.

Or Visit: <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/002476.htm>

