



1. What is mercury and where can I find it?

Mercury is a metal that occurs naturally in the environment. It can also enter into the air, water, or soil when manufacturing facilities burn coal and waste. Mercury can be found in a variety of products including fluorescent lamps, mirror coatings, batteries, agricultural chemicals, medical devices, skin-lightening creams, herbal remedies, and glass thermometers.

2. How might I be exposed to mercury?

The most common way to be exposed to mercury is by eating mercury-contaminated fish. You can also be exposed to mercury by breathing in mercury vapors in contaminated air. Silver-colored dental fillings contain mercury, but are not a significant source of mercury exposure.

3. How can mercury affect my health?

Mercury poisoning can cause damage to the nervous system, kidneys, liver, lungs, and immune system. This is a serious problem for pregnant women and children. Fetuses and young children are more at risk of mercury poisoning than adults because their nervous systems are still developing.

4. How can I reduce my exposure to mercury?

Be aware of and follow fish consumption advisories in your area. Carefully handle and properly dispose of products that contain mercury. Do not go near areas where liquid mercury is used or has recently been spilled. For instructions on how to safely clean up a mercury spill, contact the Los Angeles County Health HazMat Division at (323) 890-4317.

Sources

1. *Mercury*. L.A. Department of Public Health. <http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/tox/>
2. *Mercury*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <http://www.cdc.gov/Environmental/>
3. *Mercury*. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency <http://www.epa.gov/>

For additional resources, please dial 2-1-1 or visit the L.A. County Department of Public Health website <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov>.