

HOW CAN MERCURY AFFECT MY BABY?



Mercury is harmful to brain development. It can also cause permanent problems like:

- Low brain, bone, and nervous system growth
- Reading and learning disabilities; lower IQ
- Increased chance of behavioral and neurological (brain, nerve, and spinal cord) disorders
- Decreased attention span and coordination
- Kidney failure, blindness, and deafness
- Preterm (early) birth
- Loss of pregnancy if mercury levels are very high

CHECK FOR MERCURY:

- Get tested!
 - Mercury is checked using a blood test.
 - If you have high mercury levels while pregnant, your baby will also need to be tested at birth.



HELPFUL TIPS:



- While you are pregnant, eating fish is very important. Fish have vitamins, minerals, and healthy fats that are good for your baby's development.
- To minimize mercury exposure, eat one serving of the following fish 2x each week:
 - anchovies
 - salmon
 - shrimp
 - sardines
 - cod
 - tilapia
 - pollock
- 1 serving = 8 oz, or about the size of the palm of your hand

LEARN MORE:



Call:
New Jersey Poison Control Center
1-800-222-1222

Visit Online:

- **NJDOH Biomonitoring Program:**
 - bit.ly/biomon-prg
- **NJDOH Mercury Exposure:**
 - bit.ly/merc-exp
- **NJ Department of Environmental Protection:**
 - bit.ly/dep-fish-eat-smart
- **Centers for Disease Control & Prevention:**
 - bit.ly/cdc-merc-facts

Speak to your health care provider if you have any concerns.



MERCURY EXPOSURE & PREGNANCY:

HOW TO PROTECT YOU & YOUR BABY

WHAT IS MERCURY?



Mercury is a toxic metal also known as quicksilver. It is usually found in:

- smoke from coal plants
- oceans, rivers, and lakes
- fish (especially large fish)
- skin lightening creams, hair, or makeup products
- mercury thermometers
- compact fluorescent lightbulbs

MERCURY & PREGNANCY

If a pregnant woman is exposed to mercury, the mercury passes from the mother to the baby through the umbilical cord.



Even though mercury may pass to the baby through breastmilk, **breastfeeding is usually the best option for your baby.** If you have high mercury levels, ask your health care provider if breastfeeding is safe.



Mercury can get into the body by:

Using skin lightening creams, hair, or makeup products with mercury.

Exposing skin to spilled mercury.

Breathing in mercury vapors.

Eating fish that are usually high in mercury, like shark, eel, raw fish, the green gland or bile of crabs and lobsters.

Do not eat anything caught in Newark Bay.



How to protect against mercury:

Do not eat seafood that is often high in mercury.

Avoid breathing in vapors or handling items that have mercury including skin lightening creams, mercury thermometers, and broken compact fluorescent light (CFL) bulbs.

Eat a healthy, well-balanced diet that has vitamins C and D, iron, calcium, and folate. Small fish, meat, cereals, beans, green leafy vegetables, and oranges are great sources.



Avoid using costume jewelry from outside the USA. It may have a pendant that contains mercury.

Do not touch liquid mercury or allow it to sit in carpeting or other outdoor spaces.

If you are exposed to mercury at work, change clothes before going home. Wash those clothes separately.

