

# Household Mercury Fact Sheet

## Be Mercury Free - Public Outreach & Education Program

**Q.** What is the goal of the Mercury Source Reduction Program?

**A.** The goal of the program is to reduce mercury within the Sacramento River watershed, which comes from households and businesses such as auto dismantlers, dental offices, hospitals and medical facilities.

**Q.** Why do we have this program?

**A.** The program is the result of National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permits. The permits limit the amount of mercury that is discharged into the Sacramento River. Local water quality agencies, including Sacramento Regional County Sanitation District and Sacramento Stormwater Quality Partnership are required by the State of California to reduce mercury discharges to local creeks and rivers.

**Q.** How and when might I be exposed to mercury?

**A.** There are several ways you and your family can be exposed to mercury. You can put you and your family at risk by keeping mercury-containing products around the home (ex. old, silver mercury thermometers that can break and release mercury) or by not following fish consumption guidelines for the specific types of fish from lakes, rivers and creeks where there are fish advisories for mercury.

**Q.** What types of household items contain mercury?

**A.** While most of the mercury in our environment comes from historical gold and mercury mining operations, industrial sites and coal-burning power plants, there are a variety of common household sources that may contain mercury such as: thermometers, thermostats, fluorescent lights and tubes, button batteries, light switches, pilot light sensors, shoes that "light up", contact lens solutions, nasal sprays, neon lamps, high intensity discharge (hid) lamps, dental amalgam used in dental fillings, pesticides (manufactured prior to 1994) and alkaline/carbon batteries or latex paints (manufactured prior to 1991).

**Q.** Are residential sources of mercury my only concern?

**A.** Be Mercury Free is working with schools and universities to identify, replace and properly dispose of mercury-containing items. We are also working to reduce mercury sources such as blood pressure cuffs in hospitals, and amalgam "silver" fillings used in dental offices. Efforts also include educating various groups about the risks of consuming specific fish species, which are affected by mercury pollution.

*Reducing mercury within the Sacramento River watershed coming from households and businesses such as hospitals, medical and dental facilities*

**be mercury free**

A Regional Partnership for Mercury Pollution Reduction

[www.bemercuryfree.net](http://www.bemercuryfree.net)  
(916) 875-6644

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Q. What health impacts can mercury have on my family?

A. Mercury exposure can lead to a variety of health problems including damage to the nervous system, brain, liver, lungs and kidneys. Children are most sensitive to mercury toxicity because their brains and nervous systems are still developing and can be irreversibly damaged by mercury exposure. Pregnant women need to pay specific attention because the fetus is most vulnerable to the toxic effects of mercury in the womb if their mothers eat foods contaminated with this toxin. The effects caused by mercury exposure may be permanent and could lead to health problems and poor school performance in children.

Q. What can I do to protect my family?

A. Rid your home of mercury-containing products. Start by replacing all mercury thermometers with non-mercury thermometers, but do not throw the old mercury thermometers in the trash. Instead, bring them to a Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) collection site.

- Handle any mercury containing products that you have with care
- Recycle fluorescent lights and tubes
- Talk to your dentist about alternatives to mercury amalgam fillings
- Follow state and local fish advisories

Q. Is there someplace I can take my mercury-containing items?

A. You can get rid of your mercury-containing items at the HHW collection site nearest you. There are three sites in the Sacramento area.

- The first is operated by the County of Sacramento and is located at 4450 Roseville Road. For information and hours of operation call (916) 875-5555 or visit [www.sacgreenteam.com/hazardous](http://www.sacgreenteam.com/hazardous).
- The second is operated by the City of Sacramento and is located at 8491 Fruitridge Road. For information and hours of operation call (916) 379-0500 or visit [www.pwsacramento.com/solidwaste](http://www.pwsacramento.com/solidwaste).
- The third is operated by the City of Folsom. The City of Folsom offers a pick up service. For more information call (916) 355-8397 or visit [www.folsomhazmat.com](http://www.folsomhazmat.com).

Q. Where can I find additional information?

A. For more information about reducing mercury in the environment and protecting your family from mercury exposure, visit [www.bemercuryfree.net](http://www.bemercuryfree.net) or call (916) 875-6644.

