

## SPILL CLEAN-UP

Do not touch the mercury. Put on gloves to minimize contact with mercury.

**On a hard surface** use stiff paper to push beads of mercury together, use an eyedropper to suction beads of mercury. Place the mercury in a sealed container. Pick up any remaining beads of mercury with sticky tape and place all clean-up materials in a plastic bag.

**On a carpet or rug**, the mercury-contaminated section should be cut out. This cut-out section, along with all cleanup items, should be placed in a plastic bag.

**REMEMBER:** Wash your hands very thoroughly with soap and water after cleaning up the spill. This will ensure that if any mercury is on you, it will be flushed down the drain rather than being transferred to your mouth or eyes. Also you should remember that any tools used for clean up are considered contaminated and need to be disposed of along with the mercury.

## LARGE OR SMALL SPILL?

### Small Spill -

Small spills are those with less than a dime-sized puddle of mercury metal.

### Large Spill -

Mercury spills larger than a dime-sized puddle should be handled by hazardous material cleanup professionals or an environmental cleanup contractor.

## MERCURY AND FISH

When mercury gets into bodies of water, it can be converted into a substance called methylmercury. This substance can be dangerous to you if you eat too much fish from these contaminated waters. Generally, the fish that eat other fish (walleye, bass, pike, etc.) have higher levels of mercury. The smaller fish (panfish) usually have lower levels of mercury in them.

It is recommended that women who are pregnant or may become pregnant and children should eat 2 or less meals a week of fish with only 1 of those meals being walleye, bass, pike, or catfish.

Women who are beyond child-bearing and men can eat an unlimited amount of canned fish or panfish but, only 1 meal per week should be walleye, bass, pike, or catfish.

For more information contact:

### Vernon County Health Department

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# Mercury



*WHAT IS IT?*

*WHERE DO YOU FIND IT?*

*-AND-*

*WHAT YOU CAN DO TO*

*STAY SAFE.*

## WHAT IS MERCURY?

**Mercury** is a naturally occurring metal that is a liquid at normal room temperatures. Mercury has many useful properties and has been used in many household and industrial products. Mercury is also found in coal and other fuels.

When mercury, the silvery liquid seen in thermometers, is exposed to the environment, the mercury becomes a gas and an air contaminant. Eventually, it falls back to the earth in rain, falling on land, water and vegetation. Each time it rains, mercury enters surface waters where fish and other wildlife take it up in their bodies. This is why there are advisories against eating certain types of fish from certain bodies of water.

## HEALTH EFFECTS?

Mercury causes damage to the brain, nerves, and kidneys if you come in contact with it. Mercury can enter your body through contact with skin, breathing it in, or swallowing it.

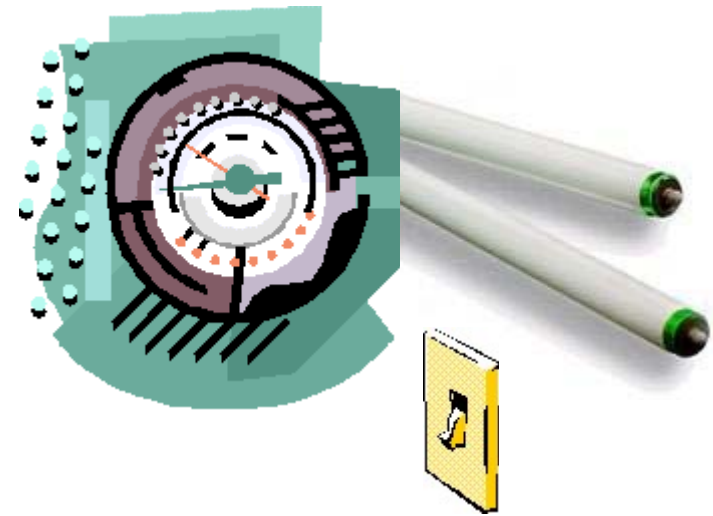
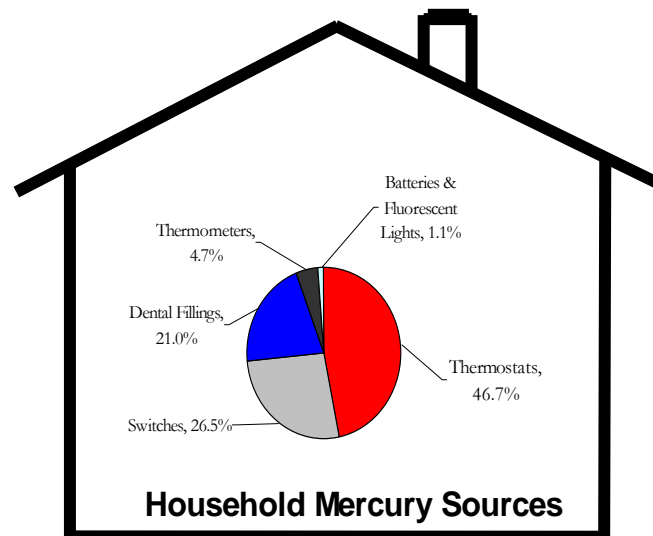
Some signs of mercury poisoning are slowed brain and motor functioning, tremors, kidney failure, memory loss, and change in personality.

Long-term effects of mercury at low levels include, irritability, insomnia, and various kidney diseases.

## WHERE DO YOU FIND MERCURY?

**Mercury-containing products** can include thermostats, certain switches, dental fillings, thermometers, etc. These products are generally safe to use but, they should be disposed of properly. Fluorescent light bulbs also contain mercury. Most manufacturers have reduced the amount of mercury in each bulb; however, they should be carefully stored and disposed of. Bulbs should remain intact for disposal. In order to reduce the amount of mercury in your home, you can use bulbs which contain lower amounts of mercury. These bulbs generally have green end caps and the packaging indicates that the bulbs are low mercury and safer for the environment.

**Remember:** Always handle mercury - containing products carefully.



## MERCURY THERMOMETERS

**Mercury thermometers** can easily be broken if dropped during use and require careful clean-up. Mercury from a broken thermometer should not be flushed down the drain or thrown in the garbage. You need to ventilate the affected area because breathing mercury vapors is a hazard. Do not use a vacuum for clean-up because this will only increase the amount of mercury you are breathing. After clean-up, place all the mercury, broken glass and clean-up materials in a zip-lock bag. These materials should be recycled through a local mercury recycling program or a hazardous waste contractor. Homeowners can also recycle mercury using household hazardous waste collections.

