

GREENPEACE

National Mercury Testing Program

CLEAN ENERGY NOW



The Rise of Mercury Pollution

There is growing concern and scientific evidence that many Americans are being exposed to harmful levels of mercury pollution. However, the Bush administration is failing to protect Americans from this dangerous toxin. The President has missed an opportunity to clean up mercury from power plants, the single largest mercury source in the country. Siding with the dirty energy lobby, the President has issued a mercury clean up law that violates the Clean Air Act. This law is being challenged in court by environmental groups and numerous states' Attorney Generals who argue a 90% reduction in power plant mercury emissions is both achievable and required by law.

What is Mercury and Who is Affected by Mercury Pollution?

Mercury is a neurotoxin that is most often seen as a by-product from industrial processes like power plants, incinerators and chemical factories. Emissions from dirty energy sources like coal-fired power plants account for the largest single source of mercury emissions in the United States - approximately 42%.

Elevated levels of mercury are harmful to everyone and women of childbearing age are especially at risk because the unborn and very young are especially vulnerable to mercury contamination. Mercury adversely affects fetal development of the brain and central nervous system and infants are further exposed to mercury from their mother's breast milk. Exposures at these early stages are particularly dangerous and can affect the development of memory, attention and language.

According to Environmental Protection Agency scientists and the Center for Disease Control, one in eight (around 630,000) American children are born with potentially unsafe levels of mercury in their blood.

How are People Exposed to Mercury?

When mercury is produced, it is released and absorbed into the atmosphere and then falls to the Earth in rain and

snow, making its way into our lakes and rivers. Once in the water, toxic mercury is absorbed through the muscle tissue of fish.

Most people are exposed to mercury by consuming the polluted fish. As a result, federal and state governments warn people to limit the consumption of certain species of fish and fish caught in waters that are contaminated with mercury.

People that work in industries that regularly handle mercury (dentistry, thermometer production) or deal with high level of mercury emissions (electricity generation primarily through coal, chlorine production through chlor-alkali facilities, insecticides, etc.) are also at an increased risk for exposure to mercury pollution.

The Food and Drug Administration is charged with the protection of the public from mercury in store-bought fish. Unfortunately their recommendations are vague and provide insufficient information to the public. Their most recent advisory suggests that "as a matter of prudence, women might wish to modify the amount and type of fish they consume if they are planning to become pregnant, nursing, or feeding a young child."

What is the Solution?

Efforts to reduce mercury pollution from power plants are not enough. To achieve a sustainable future, we must switch to clean energy now. Renewable energy utilizes the unlimited power of the wind, sun and other sources to create power without pollution. Clean energy technology is readily available in cost-effective forms, and is the only certain path toward achieving a healthy, safe future.

Unfortunately, the Bush administration is still relying on outdated forms of energy that produce pollution such as mercury. As a result, a coalition of concerned groups is calling for a new energy initiative that would invest in renewable energy innovation and increased efficiency. If accomplished, the "Apollo Project" would create over three million jobs, reduce our dependence on foreign oil and save billions of taxpayer dollars.

Order your mercury hair testing today: www.greenpeaceusa.org/mercury

Fish Consumption Advisories for Women of Child-Bearing Age and Small Children

Fish that are low in mercury: (can be eaten in moderation) Abalone (farmed), Anchovie, Butterfish, Calamari (squid), Catfish, Caviar (farmed), Clams, Crab (king), Crawfish/crayfish, Flounder, Haddock, Hake, Herring, Lobster (spiny/rock), Mackerel (Atlantic), Mussels (farmed), Oysters, Perch (ocean), Pollock, Salmon (wild), Sardines, Scallops, Shad, Shrimp, Sole, Sturgeon (farmed), Tilapia, Trout, Whitefish

Eat Sparingly: (less than six 6 oz servings a month) Carp, Cod, Crab (dungeness), Crab (blue), Crab (snow), Mahi Mahi, Monkfish, Perch (freshwater), Skate, Snapper, Tuna (canned, chunk light)

Avoid: (less than three 6 oz servings a month) Bluefish, Croake, Halibut, Lobster (American/Maine), Rockfish, Sea Bass, Sea Trout (Weakfish), Tuna (canned, white albacore), Tuna (fresh)

Do Not Eat: Grouper, Mackerel (king), Marlin, Orange Roughy, Shark, Swordfish, Tilefish

These advisories are intended for women of childbearing age and small children. Developing fetuses and small children are especially susceptible to health impairment from elevated mercury levels. However, if other people wish to reduce their exposure to mercury, they should also generally adhere to these advisories and also work to reduce mercury pollution at the source. To find out specific fish advisories in your state, visit: www.epa.gov/waterscience/fish

*Fishing and farming practices of select species have raised environmental concerns. Check the Ocean Friendly Seafood Guide to learn more at: www.blueocean.org Sources: Natural Resources Defense Council, the Environmental Protection Agency and the Food and Drug Administration

Greenpeace Hair Sampling Program for Mercury

Greenpeace has initiated a research study that is being conducted by the Environmental Quality Institute (EQI) at the University of North Carolina-Asheville. This study seeks to ascertain the levels of mercury in people's bodies across the United States and Canada through the analysis of hair samples. The specific purpose of this study is to determine whether mercury exposure levels in the United States are exceeding standards set to protect public health.

There is a small fee [\$25] associated with this sampling project. Everyone is eligible to participate but Greenpeace is especially looking for women of childbearing age. Participants will receive a sampling kit in the mail which will include a questionnaire, instructions, and consent form. Individual results will remain confidential between the participant and EQI.

People who are interested in being tested for mercury or have questions about the program should visit our website:

<http://www.greenpeaceusa.org/mercury>

If you have questions about our program, please feel free to contact us:

**1.800.326.0959(tollfree) or
mercury@wdc.greenpeace.org**