



Contaminate Information Sheet

Mercury

- ★ Naturally occurring liquid metal found in the soil & rock of some areas, when heated it becomes a colorless, odorless gas
- ★ Inorganic mercury enters the air from mining ore deposits, burning coal & waste, & from manufacturing plants
- ★ Methylmercury (organic compound) is produced by microscopic organisms in the water & soil.
- ★ Can be deposited as rain
- ★ Methylmercury builds up in the tissue of fish, therefore older, larger fish have higher concentrations
- ★ Harms the nervous system, & a greater risk to children & developing fetuses.
- ★ Vapors are more harmful because it reaches the brain
- ★ Can permanently damage the brain, kidneys, and developing fetus. Effects on brain may result in irritability, shyness, tremors, changes in vision or hearing and memory losses.
- ★ Young children more sensitive to mercury than adults. Problems can occur with nervous & digestive systems, and kidney damages
- ★ Passes from mother's body to developing fetus, possibly causing brain damage, mental retardation, in coordination, blindness, seizures and inability to speak
- ★ Passes through breast milk to a nursing infant