

## What should I do if there is a mercury spill?

In the event of a mercury spill, ventilate the area and make sure children and pets are away from the spill. **DO NOT** vacuum or sweep up the mercury because that will only increase the area of your home contaminated with mercury. **DO NOT** pour mercury down the drain.

- First gather two stiff pieces of paper or cardboard, an eyedropper, gloves, plastic bag, duct tape or packing tape, flashlight and a wide mouth container. Use gloves and do not, under any circumstances, touch the mercury.
- Use the flashlight to locate the mercury (the mercury beads will reflect the light, making them easier to find.)
- Push the beads of mercury together with the cardboard and use the eyedropper to suction up the beads of mercury.
- Use the tape to gather up any remaining beads of mercury.
- Once all the beads of mercury have been collected, seal them in the container and call the Town of Clover to find out how to properly disposal of mercury.

For more information on mercury visit SCDHEC at <http://www.scdhec.gov/environment/admin/mercury/>

## For more information

SCDHEC Mercury Reduction Initiative  
[www.scdhec.gov/environment/admin/mercury/](http://www.scdhec.gov/environment/admin/mercury/)

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)  
[www.epa.gov/mercury/](http://www.epa.gov/mercury/)

Town of Clover  
[www.cloversc.org](http://www.cloversc.org)

Fish Consumption  
[www.scdhec.gov/fish](http://www.scdhec.gov/fish)



Town of Clover

The Town with "LOVE" in the middle.

# Mercury: You, Your Health & Your Home



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# What you need to know about Mercury

## *What is Mercury?*

Mercury, also known as quicksilver, is a heavy, silver, metallic liquid at room temperature. While it is a naturally occurring element, human activity is causing an increase in the amount of mercury that is released into the environment.

## *How does mercury impact the environment?*

Mercury moves through the environment in vapor form and in particle form. It is most commonly found in bodies of water because of increases in the levels of mercury in the air and because of runoff. Once in water, mercury often mixes with bacteria to create a highly toxic form: methyl-mercury. Mercury collects in the tissue of fish and can therefore be ingested by humans. Mercury is toxic both to humans and wildlife. As a result, many states, including North Carolina, have issued fish consumption advisories. For more information on fish consumption advisories in South Carolina, visit <http://www.scdhec.gov/environment/water/fish/>.

## *What are some household sources of mercury?*

While the majority of mercury in the environment comes from combustors and incinerators, people can be exposed to mercury through a variety of household sources, such as:

- Thermometers
- Thermostats
- Fluorescent lights
- Button batteries
- Alkaline & carbon batteries before 1991
- Latex paints prior to 1991
- Some light switches
- Pilot light sensors
- Some shoes that "light up"
- Some contact lens solutions
- Some nasal sprays
- Neon lamps
- High intensity discharge (HID) lamps
- Dental amalgam used in some dental fillings
- Some pesticides before 1994

## *What are the health impacts of mercury?*

Mercury exposure can lead to a variety of health problems depending on the length of exposure and the amount of mercury you are exposed to. Mercury can cause a variety of problems with the nervous system, brain, liver, lungs and kidneys. Mercury also causes a variety of problems for developing fetuses. Symptoms of short-term exposure to high levels of mercury include: shortness of breath, muscle aches, fever and sore gums. Symptoms of long-term exposure to high levels of mercury include: trembling hands, numbness or tingling in the lips, hands and feet. Prolonged exposure may result in difficulty walking, vision and hearing impairments, and in some cases coma and death.

## *What can I do?*

- Do not buy products that contain mercury. Many mercury-free alternatives exist.
- Do not discard any mercury-containing items in the trash; instead, contact the Town of Clover to find out how to properly dispose of mercury.
- Recycle mercury-containing products such as fluorescent bulbs, when possible
- Check to be sure that mercury is removed from appliances that are recycled or accepted for scrap. For example, mercury switches are found in some chest freezers, washing machines, sump pumps, electric space heaters and clothes irons.
- Conserve energy