

Health 101 | Mercury Poisoning

Consumers and businesses are being encouraged to purchase energy-saving compact fluorescent lighting. These mercury filled lights will soon surround us and as with any glass bulb; breakage and disposal of a consumable item is common. Read on to learn about mercury poisoning and how to properly handle compact fluorescent lights.



About Mercury

Mercury is a heavy, silvery, odorless liquid. Mercury can evaporate into the air at normal temperatures. If heated, such as by a welding or cutting torch, lit up in a light bulb, it evaporates much more quickly. Mercury vapor in the air is colorless and odorless—but **very toxic**. Mercury can also enter your body by being absorbed through your skin.

What can mercury do to a person?

A sudden high exposure to mercury vapor inhaled into the lung causes headaches, cough, chest pain, and difficulty breathing. It may also cause soreness of the mouth, loss of teeth, nausea, and diarrhea. It may lead to permanent lung scarring. A very high exposure to mercury can damage your kidneys.

Long-term exposure to mercury can cause effects which develop gradually. It may cause shaking of the hands, eyelids, lips, tongue, or jaw. It may cause headaches, trouble sleeping, personality change, memory loss, irritability, indecisiveness and loss of intelligence. It can also cause skin rash, sores in the mouth, or sore and swollen gums. Many of these symptoms go away when the exposure to mercury stops. Your body gets rid of mercury through urine.

Treatments for mercury poisoning pull mercury out of your body and into the urine. This medicine is only used if mercury exposure is recent—not if mercury exposure occurred many years ago. When the effects of mercury last for years after exposure stops, that injury is usually permanent.

What can the medical exam and tests look for?

If your work history shows you were likely exposed to a lot of mercury, you will be offered a medical exam. Depending on what the exam finds, you may be offered additional tests to look for possible long-term effects. Since mercury mainly affects the brain and nervous system, the exam and the tests will look for effects there.

During your medical exam, we will look carefully for signs of damage from mercury, and ask you questions about these effects. If the doctor sees any signs, or hears from you about symptoms of mercury damage, he or she will order additional tests. If your medical exam shows that you have a tremor or loss of feeling in your feet or hands, the doctor will likely arrange for tests called nerve conduction studies and electromyography. If the exam shows that you may have been affected by personality change, irritability or memory loss, the doctor will likely arrange neuropsychological tests. These tests include pencil and paper tests of memory, understanding of written materials, and some coordination tests using blocks or pegs.

After your exam and tests, you will receive a letter summarizing what the doctor found, and copies of your test results. If the exam or tests find something important, the letter will urge you to follow up with your own doctor or with a specialist.

Caberra says no to the increased use of mercury-filled consumables.

There are alternative light solutions that save energy and produce higher quality light. Say no to mercury. www.g2led.com



Health 101 | Mercury Poisoning

Proper Disposal of Compact Fluorescent Lighting



“Spiral Bulbs” are everywhere—homes, the office, retail stores, restaurants and more. Be aware of how to respond to a broken, mercury-filled bulb.

EPA recommends the following clean-up and disposal

Before Clean-up: Air Out the Room

- + Have people and pets leave the room, and don't let anyone walk through the breakage area on their way out.
- + Open a window and leave the room for 15 minutes or more.
- + Shut off the central forced-air heating/air conditioning system, if you have one.

Clean-Up Steps for Hard Surfaces

- + Carefully scoop up glass pieces and powder using stiff paper or cardboard and place them in a glass jar with metal lid (such as a canning jar) or in a sealed plastic bag.
- + Use sticky tape, such as duct tape, to pick up any remaining small glass fragments and powder.
- + Wipe the area clean with damp paper towels or disposable wet wipes. Place towels in the glass jar or plastic bag.
- + Do not use a vacuum or broom to clean up the broken bulb on hard surfaces.

Clean-up Steps for Carpeting or Rug

- + Carefully pick up glass fragments and place them in a glass jar with metal lid (such as a canning jar) or in a sealed plastic bag.
- + Use sticky tape, such as duct tape, to pick up any remaining small glass fragments and powder.
- + If vacuuming is needed after all visible materials are removed, vacuum the area where the bulb was broken.
- + Remove the vacuum bag (or empty and wipe the canister), and put the bag or vacuum debris in a sealed plastic bag.

Clean-up Steps for Clothing, Bedding and Other Soft Materials

- + If clothing or bedding materials come in direct contact with broken glass or mercury-containing powder from inside the bulb that may stick to the fabric, the clothing or bedding should be thrown away. Do not wash such clothing or bedding because mercury fragments in the clothing may contaminate the machine and/or pollute sewage.
- + You can, however, wash clothing or other materials that have been exposed to the mercury vapor from a broken CFL, such as the clothing you are wearing when you cleaned up the broken CFL, as long as that clothing has not come into direct contact with the materials from the broken bulb.
- + If shoes come into direct contact with broken glass or mercury-containing powder from the bulb, wipe them off with damp paper towels or disposable wet wipes. Place the towels or wipes in a glass jar or plastic bag for disposal.

Disposal of Clean-up Materials

- + Immediately place all clean-up materials outdoors in a trash container or protected area for the next normal trash pickup.
- + Wash your hands after disposing of the jars or plastic bags containing clean-up materials.
- + Check with your local or state government about disposal requirements in your specific area. Some states do not allow such trash disposal. Instead, they require that broken and unbroken mercury-containing bulbs be taken to a local recycling center.
- + Future Cleaning of Carpeting or Rug: Air Out the Room During and After Vacuuming
- + The next several times you vacuum, shut off the central forced-air heating/air conditioning system and open a window before vacuuming.
- + Keep the central heating/air conditioning system shut off and the window open for at least 15 minutes after vacuuming is completed.

Increased mercury in our environment is not a trade-off for energy savings, it's an uninformed, unnecessary health hazard.

LED lighting provides MORE benefits:

LED is MORE than Christmas Lights or flashlights. LED is now for business and home. Get more from LED: more efficiency, more brilliancy, more life-span. Save more money and enjoy “instant on” beautiful white light. Lights that are finally proven to last 5 years or longer.

There is a mercury-free alternative.

Say No to Mercury-Filled Compact Fluorescents

Improper disposal of these bulbs can cause irreversible damage to our planet: soil, air, seas, fish, animals and us. Support the purchase of LED lighting.

Learn more at www.G2LED.com