

MERCURY EXPOSURE in PREGNANT WOMEN and CHILDREN – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: I've heard that exposure to mercury can cause health problems, such as autism, in children. Is that really true?

A: It is an irrefutable fact that mercury is a potent neurotoxin that can cause neurological damage, sensory motor disorders, a loss of social/verbal skills and gastrointestinal disease. Also, the unborn, toddlers and children are more vulnerable to its devastating effects. We know that at higher levels, all people can be poisoned by mercury. What is still debated is what problems, if any, do people (specifically infants and children) have when exposed to low levels of the toxicant. Just like cancer, arthritis, Alzheimer's, diabetes and other diseases, genetic susceptibility is a likely factor. In other words, a child could go his/her entire life normally, never developing autism, unless he/she were exposed to a neurotoxin that could trigger the disorder. The CDC and the FDA should be going to great lengths to not expose any fetus, infant or child to the neurotoxin in any forms whether it be methyl, ethyl or elemental. But sadly, that is not the case. From the late 80's until today, the unborn through Rho-D products, and infants and children through flu shots and vaccines have been exposed to dangerously high levels of mercury, sometimes at over one hundred times the EPA safe limits.

Over the past ten years, thousands of parents began coming forward simultaneously with similar stories. They started with normal children that were unknowingly exposed to dangerous amounts of mercury, and subsequently regressed. They were ultimately diagnosed with neurodevelopmental disorders, namely autism. Along with these personal experiences, dozens of peer-reviewed scientific research [<http://www.nationalautismassociation.org/library/librarybibliography.pdf>] from accredited universities have since confirmed that mercury can lead to autism-like behaviors in children and a multitude of other health problems.

Q: What are the sources of mercury?

A: There are many sources [http://www.mercuryexposure.org/index.php?page_id=29] including dental amalgams, coal plants, thermometers, batteries, soil and tap water. However, prominent direct exposures come from Thimerosal, a vaccine preservative used in vaccinations, as well as seafood. Both are different types of mercury, but study after study has shown developmental problems as a result of these exposures, especially in fetuses and young children.

Q: But I thought the mercury was removed from the vaccinations?

A: That's a common misconception. Most of the mercury from vaccinations was phased out beginning in 2000 and ending as late of 2005. However, certain vaccines still contain the full 25 micrograms of mercury and exceed EPA safety guidelines. One popular vaccine is the flu shot. Almost all flu shots carry the full amount of Thimerosal, which is the mercury-based preservative. Mercury-containing Flu shots should not be given to pregnant women and children based on peer-reviewed research [<http://www.nationalautismassociation.org/library.php>] and common sense, but many doctors and medical personnel are encouraged to recommend the shot regardless of its mercury content.

Q: If mercury in vaccinations was mostly phased out in 2005, wouldn't autism be a thing of the past? How can it cause autism if it's not there?

A: Although vaccine manufacturers were supposed to switch to mercury-free production as of 2001, many of the vaccinations had a very long shelf life, hence the mercury preservative. Children born in 2005 may have been exposed to hundreds of times the safe limit of mercury according to EPA safety guidelines. On average, children are not diagnosed with autism until 36 to 44 months of age.

Also, the concern doesn't necessarily focus on how much mercury children get, but when. We believe that the timing of exposure puts developing fetuses, infants and young children at high risk. Remember, very young children and fetuses were not exposed to Thimerosal at such a young age until the 1980's. Exposure this early is a relatively new phenomenon. Click here to view the 1983 immunization schedule [<http://www.putchildrenfirst.org/media/CDC1983.pdf>] and here to view the 2006 schedule [<http://www.putchildrenfirst.org/media/CDC2006.pdf>]. Also keep in mind that just because it says "Thimerosal-free" doesn't mean the shot has no mercury in it. Trace amounts are still in many of the routine vaccines, and for certain individuals, especially fetuses and infants, this could still be a very unsafe amount.

Seafood consumption may also create unsafe mercury levels in your fetus/child. Recent studies [<http://www.nationalautismassociation.org/pdf/sucklingrat.pdf>] show that pregnant women especially should limit their seafood intake. One from the UK suggests that eating seafood actually boosts IQ levels, but has been heavily outnumbered by research that has concluded the opposite.

Q: Then what types of seafood should I avoid eating?

A: In general, the higher up the food chain you go, the greater the threat from mercury exposure. Large fish such as shark, swordfish, king mackerel, and tilefish live longer and accumulate more mercury over time. However, since nearly all fish contain at least some mercury, caution should be used to limit consumption across the board. A list of several types of fish and typical mercury exposure levels can be accessed at the FDA Food Safety website: [<http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~frf/sea-mehg.html>]

Q: What about the healthy Omega oils/Essential Fatty Acids and all the protein we get from fish? How are we supposed to get that if we don't eat seafood?

A: Protein is available in a wide variety of alternate sources and many supplements are available that provide Omega oils in purified form to eliminate mercury and other toxins. There are also other food sources [<http://www.whfoods.com/genpage.php?tname=nutrient&dbid=84>] that are high in Omegas. Flax seeds and Walnuts are actually higher in Omega 3's than seafood. Soybeans and Winter squash are also good sources of Omega 3. Most health food stores stock Omega supplements. Be sure to check the label or with the manufacturer to be sure there is no mercury before purchasing.

Q: I'm pregnant and love tuna fish. A couple of cans a week can't hurt, right?

A: According to the FDA, a can of light tuna contains .852 micrograms of mercury. While this is certainly less than many other types of seafood, individual susceptibility varies.

Pregnant and nursing women need to be aware that the developing brain is especially sensitive to mercury, and that the potential effects of even very tiny amounts of mercury upon infants are still not fully known.

Q: I heard that there are different kinds of mercury and that the mercury used in vaccines is the gentle kind. Is this still the case?

A: There are no gentle forms of mercury. It was once thought that ethylmercury from vaccines was safer than methylmercury because the body is able to excrete it more quickly. However, recent research has disproven that theory. While ethylmercury does leave the bloodstream faster, it lodges itself into the fatty tissue, organs and the brain. Ethylmercury that has crossed the blood brain barrier results in twice the amount of inorganic mercury in the brain compared to methylmercury causing irreparable damage.

Q: My OBGYN and all the pediatricians I've talked to say that mercury exposure from vaccines and fish is small and can't hurt me or my family. Why should I limit this exposure?

A: At one point in time, many things were deemed safe by the medical community, including lead, aspartame, cigarette smoking, etc. It's basically a matter of common sense. Mercury is the second most toxic substance on earth. It is a neurotoxin that has been shown to cause rapid cell death, [<http://movies.commonsonline.org/movies/mercury/>] especially in males. Mercury is believed by some experts to be over 100 times more toxic to the brain than lead. With all of the measures taken to reduce lead exposure, it makes sense to avoid exposures to an even more threatening neurotoxin. You and your children will be much healthier for it.

Q: Things like Autism, ADHD, and speech problems don't run in my family. Why should I be worried about something that seems entirely genetic?

A: Many, if not most of the parents that now have children with autism, have no prior cases of the disorder within their families.

Many do, however, share a common genetic thread. Autoimmune disorders [<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/000816.htm>] seem to run heavily within autism families. This includes Lupus, Multiple Sclerosis, Asthma, Allergies, Rheumatoid Arthritis, and more. One study out of Columbia University [<http://www.nationalautismassociation.org/pdf/hornig.pdf>] found that rats with a genetic predisposition to autoimmune disorders developed autistic-like behaviors after being exposed to Thimerosal.

Q: But I've read that the increase in autism is caused by better awareness and better diagnosing. Doesn't that make more sense?

A: The characteristics of autism spectrum disorders, all of which are mirrored in the symptoms of mercury toxicity [<http://www.nationalautismassociation.org/library/autism-hgpoisoning.pdf>], are very hard to miss. With an estimated 80% of those diagnosed with autism being under the age of 18 years, there is no corresponding number within the adult population. Better awareness and widening of diagnostic criteria, although may have contributed some, cannot explain the dramatic increase of the past two decades. There have also been scientific studies that have concluded that the rise is real and not the result of better diagnosis, and again, many parents have never had the disorder in their families until

the last two decades.

Q: How do I know for sure that my flu shot or my baby's vaccines contain no Thimerosal?

A: You must read all the labels, including the vial label, the box it came in and the package insert. Be aware that some doctors and nurses may become annoyed at your requests. That's okay. You and your child's health is much more important than the frustration that may come from asking questions.

Q: My OBGYN doesn't like mercury either, but she says the flu shot is safe after the first trimester. Why shouldn't I trust her?

A: Keep in mind that doctors are going by the information presented to them. Sometimes even they don't have all the facts. There have been no studies whatsoever that show the use of Thimerosal during pregnancy is safe. Ultimately, it's your decision. So take however long you need to get all the facts before making a choice that's right for you and your family.

Q: I'm terrified of the flu, but don't want to expose my fetus/baby to Thimerosal. What choices do I have?

A: If you must have a flu shot, request a Thimerosal-free flu shot. Read the label, box, and package insert to make sure you have a vaccine that is free of Thimerosal. Also, be sure the flu shot is right for you and your family. Have all the facts about the flu vaccine's efficacy [<http://www.nationalautismassociation.org/pdf/FluVaxPregineffective2004.pdf>] beforehand. Also, there are studies showing that flu vaccine virus itself during pregnancy can lead to developmental problems. [<http://ajp.psychiatryonline.org/cgi/content/full/161/5/889?>] So, every expectant mother should ask her doctor, "Why should I be injected with a flu virus given the facts?" and think critically when he/she answers your question.

Q: I have an Rh negative blood type and heard that mercury is in the shots given to pregnant women with this blood type. Is that true?

A: Prenatal shots for Rh negative women were supposed to be entirely Thimerosal-free as of 2001. However, ask to check the vial label, box and package insert to make sure the shot is completely free of Thimerosal.

Q: I'm breastfeeding and my doctor suggested both my baby and myself receive flu shots. Can mercury from flu shots pass through my breast milk?

A: Yes. More importantly, your baby could be exposed to double the amount of Thimerosal in a short timeframe. If you are positive that you want flu shots for yourself and your child, it is extremely important to get only Thimerosal-free flu shots. Be sure whomever is administering the flu shot understands that you are breastfeeding. Ask to look at the vial label, box and package insert of the vaccines that are to be injected into both of you. Make sure they are Thimerosal-free. If they are not, request vaccines that are Thimerosal-free.