

# Mercury (Hg)

## **What is Mercury?**

Mercury is a naturally occurring element that is found in air, water, and soil. It occurs naturally in the earth's crust and is released into the environment from volcanic activity, weathering of rocks, and as a result of human activity.

## **Does Mercury have any additional names?**

No, but it can be found in different forms such as elemental (metallic), inorganic, and organic (methylmercury, ethylmercury).

## **What are the known health effects?**

Elemental and methylmercury are toxic to the central and peripheral nervous systems. The inhalation of mercury vapor can produce harmful effects on the nervous, digestive, and immune systems, lungs and kidneys, and may be fatal. The inorganic salts of mercury are corrosive to the skin, eyes, and gastrointestinal tract, and may induce kidney toxicity if ingested.

## **How does exposure occur?**

The main way that people are exposed to mercury is by eating fish and shellfish that have high levels of methylmercury. A less common way people are exposed to mercury is breathing mercury vapor. This can happen when mercury is released from a container, or from a product or device that breaks. If the mercury is not immediately contained or cleaned up, it can evaporate, becoming an invisible, odorless, toxic vapor.

## **Is this contaminant regulated?**

Yes, and water supplied to customers of Mount Laurel MUA is in compliance with USEPA and NJDEP requirements. The maximum level permitted in water for Mercury is 2 ppb; water supplied by the MLTMUA system has a detected maximum of 0.218 ppb.

## **How can I reduce exposure?**

Mercury in drinking water can be removed at point of use by reverse osmosis.

**Additional information regarding mercury, including the information referenced can be found at:**

<https://www.wqa.org/Portals/0/Technical/Technical%20Fact%20Sheets/Mercury.pdf>

<https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaqs/tfacts46.pdf>