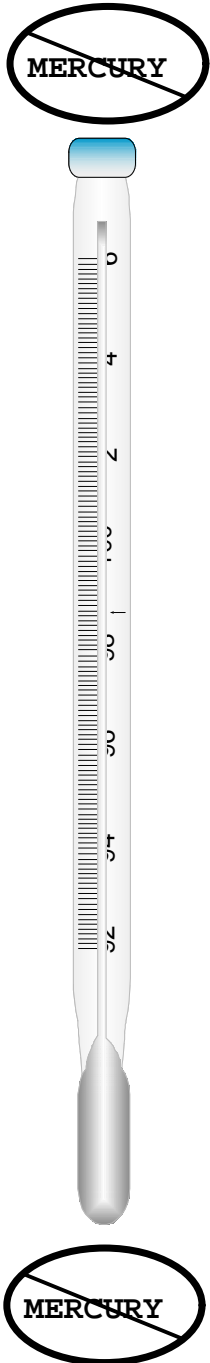


The Case against Mercury:
The Problem with Mercury Thermometers
SOURCE: DARTMOUTH HITCHCOCK MEDICAL CENTER



- Mercury emitted from a broke thermometer is a health hazard, particularly for young children. If not cleaned up correctly, it can vaporize, and if inhaled, 80% is absorbed into the blood stream.
- Mercury causes a variety of health effects, including nervous system damage, liver damage, kidney damage, muscle tremors, impaired coordination, and mental disturbances.
- Mercury is one of the most harmful and widespread pollutants in North America. It is among the most toxic substances found in health care facilities.
- A thermometer contains about 1.5 - 2.7 grams of mercury. One gram of mercury can contaminate a twenty acre lake with enough mercury to cause public advisories (warnings) to limit consumption of fish caught in that lake.
- Mercury released to the environment through broken thermometers is converted by bacteria to methylmercury which bioaccumulates in the food chain. Humans are exposed to mercury primarily by eating contaminated fish.
- Eliminating even small amounts of mercury has a beneficial effect on the environment, and reduces the potential for human mercury poisoning.
- The American Hospital Association (AHA) signed an agreement with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) committing to the virtual elimination of mercury in hospitals.
- The state of New Hampshire has issued a "Mercury Reduction Strategy" calling on hospitals to reduce their contribution to the mercury pollution problem.
- DHMC is committed to eliminating non-essential uses of mercury and mercury containing products. In support of that effort, we are selling digital thermometers at cost. They provide comparable accuracy and do not compromise patient care in any way.
- Removing mercury thermometers is a responsible action in continuing to serve the health care needs of our communities while protecting the environment.
- For more information contact the Office of Safety and Environmental Programs. Ext. 7233

