

## **Mercury Toxicity: How You May Already Have It and Not Even Know It (Part 1)**

Heavy metal and mercury toxicity are not health conditions with which many people are familiar. Yet, we hear all the time about how heart disease is the number one health crisis in the country, about how high blood pressure is the “silent killer”, and about how ever increasing numbers of our citizens are having their lives and the lives of their families destroyed by Alzheimer’s disease. Has anyone ever stop to think that mercury might be connected to these public health problems?

For all the talk today about the environment and how dangerous mercury is in our lives, I have seen for myself, on a day-to-day basis, the true effects of mercury on the health of so many of our citizens. Mercury can be found in the seafood we eat, the water we drink, and the vaccines we receive. It is the main component of ‘silver amalgam’ dental fillings and is slowly released into our body during their duration in our system. If you or someone you know suffers from heart disease, high blood pressure, memory disturbances, neurologic disease, kidney disorders, or immune system disorders, the underlying cause for all these may be mercury toxicity.

Recognized as the number one cause of death in the United States, heart disease is basically treated only after the fact – with cholesterol lowering drugs and with by-pass surgery or angioplasty. But did you also know that published research has proven that there is a link between mercury exposure and heart disease? It has long been observed that chelation therapies that remove heavy metals from body tissues have a beneficial effect on the circulation. Many patients who experienced chest pain, or other symptoms of heart disease, found relief from these symptoms after going through treatment with chelating drugs.

Alzheimer’s disease, Parkinson’s disease, Multiple Sclerosis, and Autism are all horrible health problems, which are increasing in incidence every year in this country based on data from the Center for Disease Control (CDC). Mercury toxicity has been linked to every one of these conditions through research published in mainstream peer-reviewed medical journals. I have personally seen evidence of this connection, noting in some cases miraculous improvements when patients are treated with chelating drugs that remove toxic metals.

So, the evidence is pretty clear that mercury is really bad for our health. No one disputes this but the question about HOW BAD it is seems to be what prevents more aggressive action from being taken to eliminate this toxin from our environment. Over the past 20 years, the level of mercury considered “safe” in the environment has been steadily decreased based on science, which has consistently demonstrated danger to our health when mercury is even in miniscule amounts in our bodies.

This same attitude exists in medicine in terms of what is considered “too much” mercury for a person to tolerate. The effects of mercury can be highly variable from one individual to another. In medical school, we are taught only about acute mercury toxicity (what would happen to a person if they were exposed to very high levels of mercury in a short period of time). This can cause serious health problems and lead to death, with symptoms being pretty obvious: involuntary tremors, double vision, kidney damage, and dementia. The person coming into an emergency room with these symptoms, who also gives a history of working in an industrial setting where mercury is used, will probably be diagnosed fairly quickly and appropriately treated. But what about the person who is only exposed to small amounts of mercury over a long period of time?

Individuals with milder cases of mercury toxicity exhibit symptoms that are never connected to mercury exposure. The symptoms of chronic, low level exposure to mercury can be vague and affect multiple organ systems. Whether a person becomes symptomatic depends on several factors: the cumulative amount of mercury to which they are exposed, the efficiency of their liver’s detoxification mechanisms, and their overall nutritional status. These milder symptoms can include insomnia, nervousness, mild tremor, impaired judgment and coordination, headache, fatigue, loss of sex drive, and depression. Many other more serious symptoms can then start to manifest the more severe the toxicity problem.

I see patients every day who come in with chronic degenerative diseases and are only being treated with symptomatic therapies. When I explore their history, it is possible to see links that suggest mercury overload. In order to make this diagnosis, it is necessary to use treatment that will actually “shake up”

mercury and other metals that are bound tightly to the tissues in our body. This is done in a procedure called the Chelation Challenge Test. Mercury binds very strongly to sulfur atoms attached to tissues in our nervous system. Only drugs that bind, or chelate these metals, will remove them and then release them into the urine where they can be detected. The Chelation Challenge Test is the “gold standard” for determining the relative amount of mercury present in a person as a result of chronic accumulation.

Next month, I'll go into more detail about the specialty of metal toxicology, I'll further explain what Chelation Therapy is, and I'll provide what chelating drugs are currently being used in order to bring this public health crisis under control.

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