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Poison in Our Mouth!

Go to the mirror, open your mouth and look into your teeth. If you find any silver teeth fillings, then your health may be jeopardised. Silver fillings contain 50% mercury and they could be to blame for a variety of symptoms that many people suffer from these days.

Mercury is the second most toxic element in nature and many of us are chewing on it on a daily basis. Mercury can seep into our body either through the vapour produced when chewing, during inserting or removing fillings, or in case one of the fillings chips or falls out.

The effect of mercury in the body is devastating. It has a slow toxic effect, where symptoms are often difficult to trace back to the mouth.

Mercury toxicity can be mild or strong and it can result in a variety of symptoms that differ with each person (see box for a list of symptoms). Mercury toxicity can also make you more susceptible to food intolerances and allergies. And it can increase hormonal imbalances in women, such as irregular periods and PMS. Most of all, Mercury puts a strain on the liver and can cause a toxic overload in the body.

Often, if you have a skin condition or depression, for example, nobody will ask you to visit the dentist! But you should. A leaking mercury filling in your teeth could be producing enough mercury to be toxic to your body. Mercury, and any other harmful toxic metal that enters the body, is placed in fat stores to protect important organs such as the heart.

But where else do toxic metals go? The brain. Because it is comprised of mostly fatty matter, most toxic metals lodge in the brain and cause 'brain-related' symptoms such as depression, headaches, memory loss, and more.

Also, toxic metals upset the balance of hundreds of nutrients that are vital for brain function such as copper, zinc, and manganese. As a result, they can greatly affect brain activity. Testing minerals and toxic metals can, therefore, indicate tendencies for emotional and mental conditions.

It is very important that women who are planning to conceive reduce their toxic metal burden, as some toxic metals can be dangerous to the foetus during pregnancy and are best removed before attempting conception. However, DO NOT remove your fillings if you are already pregnant or breastfeeding, as more of the metal can be released, which is dangerous for the baby. It is best to remove the fillings at least six months before conception in order for the body to clear the toxins and be ready for pregnancy.

Do I have a Mercury Toxicity?

Symptoms of Mercury Toxicity are varied but can be roughly classified in the following order according to severity. Bear in mind that each person reacts differently to toxicity, and in some people, symptoms can occur even with one filling.

Level 1

- Tiredness and lack of energy
- Sleep disturbances
- Waking up tired
- Loss of concentration
- Short-term memory loss
- Menstrual irregularities
- Mood swings and Depression

Level 2

- Feeling bloated
- Feeling unwell most of the time
- Hair and nail problems (hair loss, brittle nails)
- Food allergies and intolerances
- Feel cold and difficulty in getting warm
- Skin problems (e.g. eczema, lesions, etc.)
- Frequent colds and flu, and low immunity

Level 3

- Frequent headaches
- Insomnia
- Sore throat and congestion
- Candida overgrowth
- Thrush (vaginal)
- Metallic taste in the mouth

Level 4

- Muscle and joint pains
- IBS-like symptoms
- Severe depression and loss of appetite
- Double vision and loss of visual acuity
- Fine tremors and tingling sensations
- Bladder problems
- Skin lesions (like eczema or psoriasis)
- Chronic fatigue-like symptoms

Level 5

- Manic depression
- Insanity (Mad Hatters Disease)
- Severe loss of memory

How can I test for it?

If you have mercury fillings in your teeth, you probably have mercury in your body. The older the fillings, the higher the risk of toxicity due to the higher chance of leakage. But you can also test mercury levels in your body by doing some tests.

A hair mineral analysis (HMA) is a painless, non-invasive hair test that is used in identifying exposure levels to toxic metals such as lead, nickel, cadmium, mercury, arsenic, and aluminium. It can also be used to indicate mineral malabsorption and/or imbalances (e.g. Calcium, Magnesium, Iron, etc.).

A sample of your hair is taken to be tested, but there are some factors that affect the hair reading. Swimming (pool or sea), sweating, hair dye, hair products, and external contamination (e.g. dust, pollution, etc.) can give false results, so the hair must not be dyed for a few weeks and must be washed well before collecting the sample.

Minerals are stored in the hair. Therefore human hair can be used effectively for biological monitoring of mineral levels. Toxic metals, for example, are deposited in the hair as it grows, and the amount present reflects the body's burden of that metal. When it comes to toxic exposure and mineral imbalance, hair testing is more accurate than blood testing because it can reflect long-term exposure to toxic metals.

How do I get mercury out of my body?

Getting mercury out of the body takes about one year, presuming there is no more mercury coming in. The general outline should be as follows:

- Remove the source of toxicity by safe removal of dental amalgam fillings and replacement with white fillings. Note: the whole fillings must be removed; it is not enough to remove the top half and cover it with a white filling or a cap.
- Support the liver with diet and lifestyle (see below).
- Take supplements to aid mercury removal, such as selenium, vitamin C, and amino acids. Note: supplements are best administered under the supervision of a qualified nutritionist or a health care provider.

Diet and lifestyle:

- Eat organic products whenever possible
- Wash fruits and vegetables in a weak solution of vinegar or baking soda to remove any pesticides and heavy metal residues on the skin
- Eat a high fibre diet aids the body's elimination of toxins (e.g. brown rice, oats, rye bread)
- Consume a high protein diet from lean meats, poultry and fish, as well as vegetarian sources such as beans and pulses. Protein is crucial for liver detoxification.
- Eat plenty of sulphur-containing foods such as garlic and onions, as well as cruciferous vegetables such as broccoli, cauliflower, and cabbage as they also help detoxification
- Avoid pollution and any further exposure to heavy metals (e.g. lead paint, petrol fumes).
- Stop smoking and avoid smoky environments. Cigarettes have been shown to contain large amounts of mercury.

Case study

Julia* had unexplained skin rashes that were getting worse by the day. She tried all the creams in the world as well as many courses of antibiotics prescribed by different doctors. The rashes would appear on her feet, preventing her from wearing her shoes comfortably and walking. They got better or worse according to her stress levels and sometimes depending on the weather or what she ate.

She also had a range of other symptoms including headaches, depression, low energy levels, and abdominal bloating. Furthermore, she started reacting to foods that she was never sensitive to, such as cheese and wheat.

When I suggested she may have mercury toxicity, she thought it was ridiculous! After all, what do headaches, skin rashes, and fatigue have to do with our teeth?

After a lot of insisting and explaining, Julia finally went to have her teeth checked. It turned out she had nine fillings, many of which were leaking. After being tested, Mercury levels in her body were a lot higher than safe limits and she showed severe mercury toxicity.

Less than a week later, she decided to have them removed. Her improvements were almost instant. She walked out of the dentist's office with significant improvement. For the first time in more than a year, she could walk comfortably on her feet. Her skin rashes and lesions decreased significantly by the next day and still continue to improve.

She is now taking a set of supplements and herbs to help her body get rid of the residue mercury and to aid her liver in detoxifying the heavy metal. The detoxification process after so many years of toxicity could take up to a year or more, but at least the source has been eliminated. And now, almost two months later, she is very happy with her new-found energy, clear mind, and glowing skin.

* name changed for privacy