

# Mercury



## What is mercury?

Mercury is a toxic metal that can cause severe damage to major organs and the central nervous system. The form of mercury most commonly found in homes is a heavy, odorless, silver-colored liquid. This is found in thermometers, thermostats, and switches in appliances (such as chest freezers).

## Management of Mercury-Containing Devices:

- Purchase and use alcohol or digital thermometers whenever possible.
- Install electronic thermostats instead of those with a mercury switch.



## Disposal of Mercury-Containing Devices:

- Thermometers and mercury-containing thermostats—Bring to the Regional Collection Center for Household Hazardous Materials.
- Mercury switches in appliances—Take to reliable appliance recycler or remove switch and bring to the Regional Collection Center for Household Hazardous Materials.

## How to Handle a Mercury Spill:

- Ventilate the area.
- **DO NOT** use a household vacuum.
- Keep children and pregnant women from the area. Mercury is particularly harmful to the developing nervous system of a child.
- Wearing gloves, use an eyedropper carefully rolling onto a piece of paper. You can also use the sticky side of duct tape, fold it over to enclose the mercury.
- Put the mercury and any contaminated materials such as eyedropper and gloves in a plastic jar with a screw-top lid.
- Once all the mercury have been removed, wipe the area with a solution of one teaspoon bleach to one gallon of water with will react with the residue to eliminate mercury vapors.
- Bring the jar to the Dubuque Metropolitan Area Regional Collection Center. Call (563) 589-1720 to make an appointment.

**For more information on mercury disposal, contact the DMASWA Regional Collection Center at 563-589-1720 or the DMASWA Education Office at 563-588-7933.**