



WHAT TO DO AFTER MERCURY IS SPILLED

Follow the QR code for more information:



MERCURY CHARACTERISTICS

- Elemental mercury is a shiny, silver liquid that can evaporate into a colorless, odorless gas.
- Mercury can be found in household items, especially older ones, such as thermometers, thermostats, florescent lights, switches, batteries, and other equipment.
- When mercury is spilled, it breaks into tiny beads that scatter. These beads are heavy and hide under cabinets, in seams, and in cracks.
- People and pets can be exposed to toxic levels of mercury and mercury vapors after a release if it's not cleaned up properly.
- Exposure to mercury can result in damage to the central nervous system, kidneys, and liver.
- Young children and pregnant women are particularly susceptible to damage from mercury exposure.

IF A SPILL OCCURS

It is important that the spill be cleaned up immediately AND correctly in order to minimize contamination. Large spills will require a professional to assist in the cleanup. Smaller spills may be cleaned up at home but can still be complicated and disruptive to you and your family if not performed correctly. Improper clean-up can cause the mercury to spread, leading to more contamination, greater health risks, higher costs, and longer time for cleanup.

Follow the steps on the right to evaluate if you can safely clean up the spill yourself or if you should call a professional. Remember: if in doubt, it is better to consult a professional.

YOU CAN MOST LIKELY CLEAN UP A SMALL SPILL BY YOURSELF IF **ALL** OF THE FOLLOWING ARE TRUE:

- The spill is a small amount (a teaspoon or less). This volume is similar to the amount found in a household thermometer or the size of a dime.
- The spill is limited to a small area and mercury has not been spread around.
- The spill is on a hard surface like tile, linoleum or wood that is in good condition.
- The spill is on a small porous item like an area rug, a blanket, or clothing that can be safely and appropriately disposed.
- You are not pregnant and there are no children in the home.



CONSULT A PROFESSIONAL SKILLED IN MERCURY CLEAN-UP IF **ANY** OF THE FOLLOWING IS TRUE:

- The spill involves a large or unknown quantity of mercury.
- The spill covers a large area.
- The spill happened in a public space.
- The spill has been spread around, is in cracks and crevices or other difficult to clean places.
- The spill is on a non-disposable porous item such as wall to wall carpeting or upholstery.
- You are pregnant or there are children in the home.



Before you begin cleaning the spill, call 1 (800) 222-1222 or visit www.epa.gov/mercury for advice or assistance.



Mercury DOs and DON'Ts

DOs

- ✓ **DO** CALL YOUR LOCAL OR STATE HEALTH OR ENVIRONMENTAL AGENCY FOR ADVICE
- ✓ **Do** keep all people and pets away from the spill area
- ✓ **Do** open all exterior windows where the spill occurred
- ✓ **Do** shut off central air conditioning, heating, and fans
- ✓ **Do** close interior doors and isolate the spill from people and pets
- ✓ **Do** evaluate the size of the spill to determine your next steps

DON'Ts

- ✗ **DON'T** USE A BROOM, MOP, OR VACUUM
- ✗ **Don't** touch the mercury without proper PPE
- ✗ **Don't** walk around in mercury-contaminated clothing or shoes
- ✗ **Don't** pour mercury down any drain
- ✗ **Don't** use a washing machine to launder mercury-contaminated clothing
- ✗ **Don't** heat or incinerate contaminated items



Steps to Clean Up a SMALL Mercury Spill

CLEANING UP 1 TEASPOON OR LESS

Follow the QR code for detailed clean-up steps and more information:



STEP 1 - Isolate and Ventilate



- Do not touch mercury without proper PPE. Ensure the amount spilled is approximately one teaspoon or less. This is typically the amount found in a household thermometer, and is approximately the size of a dime when spilled.
- Open windows and ventilate the room for at least 15 minutes before starting the cleanup.
- Remove any articles of clothing that may have been contaminated with mercury before leaving the area so as not to spread contamination. Place in a durable trash bag.
- Avoid walking through the spill and clear the area of all people and pets.
- Close doors and secure the room.
- Turn off air circulation systems.

STEP 2 - Prepare to Respond



- Change into old clothes and shoes that can be discarded after cleaning.
- Remove jewelry, watches, and any other clothing with metal.
- Put on rubber or nitrile gloves and goggles or safety glasses.

STEP 3 - Clean-up



- Do not use a broom, mop, vacuum, or household cleaning products. This could spread mercury around and make cleanup more difficult.
- Begin cleaning up mercury from the outside of the spill area and work towards the center.
- Push beads of mercury together using stiff cardboard, squeegee, playing cards, or rigid paper.
- Use a flashlight to search for small droplets and collect with an eye or medicine dropper.

STEP 4 - Contain



- Remove contaminated clothing, shoes, and any other items that have come in contact with mercury and place in sealed bags or containers.
- Do not launder contaminated clothing as this may contaminate the washing machine.
- See local disposal regulations for proper disposal procedures.

STEP 5 - Decontaminate



- Use warm water and anti-dandruff shampoo that contains at least 1 percent selenium sulfide to decontaminate people and pets who may have come in contact with mercury.
- Continue ventilating the affected area to the outside for at least 24 hours.
- Contact your local environmental or health agency to learn about available screening options.
- Consult your doctor if you have any health concerns about mercury exposure.