

## For More Information...

Call the Michigan Department of  
Community Health (MDCH) at  
**1-800-648-6942**  
or visit

[www.michigan.gov/mercury](http://www.michigan.gov/mercury)  
for these other fact sheets:

- Mercury Spill Quick Guide
- How to Clean Up Spilled Mercury
- Mercury & Your Family's Health
- Mercury Spills & Your Pet
- Mercury Spills - Hiring a Cleanup Contractor
- Mercury and Electrical Work
- Mercury and HVAC Systems
- Mercury and Plumbing
- Mercury and Renovation/Energy Upgrade

To learn more about mercury in  
fish, call MDCH at  
**1-800-648-6942**  
or visit

[www.michigan.gov/eatsafefish](http://www.michigan.gov/eatsafefish).

Michigan Department  
of Community Health



Call the Michigan Department of  
Environmental Quality (MDEQ) at  
**1-800-662-9278**  
or visit

[www.michigan.gov/mercuryp2](http://www.michigan.gov/mercuryp2)  
for more information on mercury  
pollution prevention.



 Recycling sites are not able to take  
cleanup debris. To find out how to  
dispose of cleanup debris, call the  
Environmental Assistance hotline at  
**1-800-662-9278**.

# Get Rid of Mercury Safely

## Make a Mercury Carrier

Before heading off to a recycling site, you will want to make a Mercury Carrier to protect the mercury-containing item from breaking during transport.

There are many ways that you can make a Mercury Carrier. The most important thing is that you have a double layer of protection in case the item breaks.

**Some things that you can use to make a Mercury Carrier are:**



paper towel



newspaper



zip-top bags



small storage container



empty paint can



coffee can  
(plastic or metal)

## How to pack your Mercury Carrier

1. Bring your Mercury Carrier to your mercury-containing items.
2. Wrap each item in paper towel or newspaper to protect it from breaking.
3. Choose a container that the item with mercury will fit in. Place the wrapped mercury item inside the container and seal it.
4. Place that container in a SECOND container, like an empty paint can or coffee can. Seal the second container tightly.
5. Label your Mercury Carrier with the mercury containing item and the date.

## Find a Recycling Site Near You

Many Clean Sweep sites and community household hazardous waste collection centers accept mercury-containing items from the public at no charge. There are also occasional thermometer exchanges where you can turn in your old mercury thermometer and get a replacement non-mercury thermometer for free.

To find a collection site near you, visit [www.michigan.gov/mercuryp2](http://www.michigan.gov/mercuryp2),  
[www.michigan.gov/cleansweep](http://www.michigan.gov/cleansweep), [www.Earth911.org](http://www.Earth911.org), or  
[www.michiganenergyoptions.org](http://www.michiganenergyoptions.org).



# Is Your Home Mercury Free?

**A guide to some common  
household items that may  
contain mercury**

[www.michigan.gov/mercury](http://www.michigan.gov/mercury)  
[www.michigan.gov/mercuryp2](http://www.michigan.gov/mercuryp2)

Mercury is a silver liquid. It is naturally occurring. Just because it's natural doesn't mean it's safe.

### How can you and your family come into contact with mercury?

Mercury comes in many forms. You can see some forms of mercury, like the silver liquid that may be found in some thermometers and other items around your home. This type of mercury is known as *metallic mercury*.

Some forms of mercury you can't see, like the kind in certain types of fish that you eat. This type of mercury is called *methylmercury*. To learn more about mercury in fish, visit [www.michigan.gov/eatsafefish](http://www.michigan.gov/eatsafefish).

### Why is it important to make my home mercury free?

Mercury is harmful to your health and your family's health. Household items that may contain mercury can break. It is best to get rid of these items before they break.

If a mercury-containing item breaks, mercury vapors get into the air. These vapors can stick around for a long time if not cleaned up properly. Breathing in mercury vapors can cause health problems.



Cleaning up spilled mercury should be done right. Large spills can be complicated and likely require a professional to assist in the cleanup, which can be expensive. Cleanup for mercury spills may not be covered by your insurance policy. Small spills can still be complicated and disruptive to you and your family. See the Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) fact sheet "How to Clean Up Spilled Mercury," for more information about cleaning up spills.

### What are some household items that contain mercury?

The following are some household items that may contain mercury. For more examples, visit the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) website at: [www.epa.gov/mercury](http://www.epa.gov/mercury).

#### Free-flowing mercury

Free-flowing mercury is usually stored in containers like old baby food jars.

These containers can be found in garages, basements, crawl spaces, pole barns and even backyards of homes.



If you find a container like the one pictured, it is best not to open it, throw it away or dump it out. Carefully wrap the container and take it to a Clean Sweep site or your local community hazardous waste collection center.

The amount of free-flowing mercury can vary. More than likely, if a container of free-flowing mercury spilled, it would be a large spill.

#### Clocks

Antique grandfather clocks, or long case clocks, are examples of the types of clocks that may contain mercury in the pendulums.

Newer grandfather clocks and digital clocks use non-mercury alternatives and are just as accurate.

The mercury in the pendulums could have several pounds (greater than two tablespoons) of mercury in them. If the mercury were to spill out, this would be a large spill.



#### Barometers

Barometers are devices that measure air pressure. Mercury in the barometer rises or falls with changes in air pressure.

Antique barometers can contain mercury. There are non-mercury barometers that are digital or have non-mercury liquid and are just as accurate.

If a mercury-containing barometer were to break, it could have more than a quarter of a pound, or half a tablespoon, of mercury in it. This would be a large spill.



#### Thermostats

Older thermostats use mercury tilt switches to control room temperature. The tilt switch is a glass bulb with mercury in it. Digital thermostats are mercury-free.



Mercury-containing thermostats have about 3 grams, or an 1/8 of a teaspoon, of mercury in them. If mercury is tracked around, the small amount of mercury spilled can turn into a large cleanup.

Michigan law, Public Act 492 of 2006, bans the sale of thermostats that contain mercury or a mercury compound.\*

\*Visit [www.michigan.gov/deq/mercuryp2](http://www.michigan.gov/deq/mercuryp2) for more information about mercury legislation in Michigan.

**Note:** Household items that contain mercury should never be thrown away. Many Clean Sweep sites and community household hazardous waste collection centers accept mercury-containing items free of charge. Remember to transport your mercury-containing items safely.

#### Thermometers

Common household mercury thermometers include fever thermometers and oven, candy and meat thermometers.



Mercury thermometers are made of glass with the mercury inside.

Newer thermometers don't have mercury in them. Some newer thermometers are digital, while others are glass with an alcohol-based red or blue liquid inside.

A mercury thermometer has about 0.5 grams, or much less than an 1/8 of a teaspoon, of mercury. This amount would be considered a small spill, unless mercury is tracked around.

Under Michigan law, Public Act 578 of 2002, a person shall not sell, offer for sale or offer for promotional purposes a mercury thermometer in the state of Michigan.\*

#### Compact Fluorescent Light (CFLs)

CFL bulbs are energy-efficient light bulbs. They contain a very small amount of mercury. Mercury is not released when the bulb is intact or in use.

The amount of mercury vapor released from one broken CFL bulb is not enough to make anyone sick. A fever thermometer has about 100 times more mercury than a CFL bulb.

Remember when your CFL bulb burns out, recycle it at a Clean Sweep site or a household hazardous waste collection center. Some local home improvement stores also recycle CFL bulbs.

For more information on CFLs, check out the MDCH fact sheet "CFLs and Mercury".

