

# Mercury Spills & Your Pets



## Can my pet get sick from mercury?

Yes. Pets can be affected by mercury in many of the same ways humans can. Mercury can cause your pet to have digestive problems, as well as damage their kidneys and their brain.



If you break something that contains mercury in your home and your pet is in the area, they could have mercury on their feet or fur. It's important to clean your pet so that they don't get sick or track the mercury through your home.

## What if my pet was near the spilled mercury?

Mercury can get stuck on your pet's paws or hair. If your pet was anywhere near the spill area, you should assume that they have mercury on them.

After following the steps in the "**Mercury Spill Quick Guide**" to contain the spill and protect your health, use the information on the next page to learn how to clean mercury off of your pet.

Before you get started, though...

### Find a safe place for your pet.

If you haven't already, get your pet away from the spill area. Besides mercury, there could also be broken glass that your pet could step on.

Put your pet outside (carrying them, if possible) until you are able to get everything you need to clean them.

If it's too cold or unsafe outside, shut them in your bathroom or another room that does not have carpet, away from the mercury spill. If possible, open a window or turn on an exhaust fan in the room.



To learn how to clean your pet,  
turn the page...

## Step 1: Gather the items you might need to clean your pet:



disposable rags  
or sponges



selenium sulfide  
shampoo



foam shaving  
cream



grease-cutting  
dish soap



wash tub or  
bathtub

## Step 2: Wipe down your pet's feet.

If you think your pets may have walked through the mercury, before you let them back in the house:

- Wipe down their feet with a rag covered with foam shaving cream or grease-cutting dish soap.
- Put the rags into a plastic bag – tightly sealing it by tying or taping if it doesn't have a zip-top.
- Put the bag with the rest of the contaminated items from your home clean-up.

## Step 3: Wash your pet's fur.

If you think the mercury might be on your pet's fur:

- Wash your pet with a shampoo containing **selenium sulfide** like Selsun Blue®, Exsel® or Head and Shoulders Intensive Treatment Dandruff Shampoo®.
- If birds, reptiles, or other pets were exposed, call your veterinarian or MDCH at 1-800-648-6942 for information on how to clean them.



### Important!

- If possible, wash your pet outside.
  - When you're done, throw the water on cement or asphalt so the water and mercury can evaporate in the sun.
  - Do not throw the water into a storm drain or garden.
- Shampoos with selenium sulfide should not be used by pregnant women. If your pet is pregnant, ask your veterinarian for advice on how to safely remove the mercury from its fur.



## Step 4: Contact your pet's veterinarian.

After cleaning your pet, your pet might need to visit a veterinarian for follow up. Contact your veterinarian immediately if your pet is showing any of the following signs:

- weakness
- vomiting
- diarrhea
- coughing
- difficulty breathing
- lack of appetite
- tremors/shaking
- seizures
- difficulty walking, sitting, or standing
- increased urination or saliva

## Step 5: Wipe down the crate or room.

If you had put your pet in a plastic crate or in a non-carpeted room indoors:

- Wipe down the crate or floor with a disposable sponge or rag covered with shaving cream or grease-cutting dish soap.
- Put the sponge or rags into a plastic bag and tightly seal it by tying or taping if it doesn't have a zip-top.
- Put the bag with the rest of the contaminated items from your home clean-up.
- Blankets, towels or rugs in your pet's crate or bathroom will need to be laid out in the sun for a while or possibly thrown away.
- Your health department or local hazmat team may be able to test the crate and other items for mercury and give you advice about what should be done with them.



### Have questions about your pet's health?

Call your pet's veterinarian if you have other questions about your pet's exposure to mercury or mercury vapor.

You can also call the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty of Animals (ASPCA) Poison Control Center for more information specific to your pet at 1-888-426-4435.

The ASPCA typically charges a fee for this service.



## Other Concerns - Pets & Mercury

### What if my pet licked or swallowed some mercury?

Metallic mercury does not absorb into the body well through the stomach. It will usually pass through without making your pet sick. Breathing the mercury vapors, though, can make them sick. This is why it is important to make sure that the mercury is washed off.



### What are other ways my pet can be exposed to mercury?

A different type of mercury, methylmercury, is found in fish.



Tuna is high in mercury. If you give your pets tuna, don't give it to them too often. Use tuna as a treat rather than for regular meals. You may want to avoid feeding tuna to pregnant pets altogether.

People can be affected by mercury in tuna and other fish, too. For information for you and your family about avoiding mercury in fish, visit [www.michigan.gov/eatsafefish](http://www.michigan.gov/eatsafefish).



### Want to learn more?

Contact the Michigan Department of Community Health 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**
- **Questions to Ask When Hiring a Contractor**
- **Mercury & Your Family's Health**
- **Is Your Home Mercury Free?**
- **Get Rid of Mercury Safely**

