

Nutritionally Speaking

by George E. Meinig, DDS

Mercury poisoning

Dear Dr. Meinig:

For the last year I have been constantly tired out and fatigued. I have been to a couple of doctors and the only thing they find is my heartbeat has become irregular and it beats a little fast. Everything else checked out alright but why am I so irritable and depressed? Recently a friend said that she had the same symptoms as mine and they found she had a high amount of mercury in her body. I don't think that has anything to do with me but I thought you could answer me as I know you have written about mercury before. I didn't pay much attention to it then but will do so now. C.U.

Dear C. U:

More and more people are having the same symptoms and troubles you are having. Heavy metal poisoning shows up more and more frequently as a primary factor involved in chronic fatigue cases. If you haven't seen my recent two articles about this subject, drop me a line here at the OVN and I will send them to you.

Mercury is a common cause but the accumulation of too much lead, cadmium, aluminum and nickel can also be involved. When mercury gets into the system it has the ability to combine with the elements magnesium, zinc and copper. When it does, it induces a change in them and in their structure.

This causes a disruption of the normal responsibilities of these elements, particularly their critical electron transfer reactions that are needed to carry out body functions.

Mercury also has a special affinity for those parts of our protein intake that contain sulphur. In its binding to these enzymes, mercury blocks their ability to function. These enzymes are not only involved with activities inside of cells, but they play an active role in scavenging and detoxifying harmful substances in the body. When these actions are curtailed or stopped, toxins keep accumulating and they put a tremendous load on one's immune system.

Mercury mainly accumulates within various organs and tissues that contain the greatest concentration of what are called sulphhydryl enzymes. When this occurs the tissues and organs most often involved include the brain, nerve tissue, spinal nerves, pituitary and



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adrenal glands, liver, kidneys, spleen, lungs and the lymph glands in the intestines.

Mercury enters the body by way of the lungs, stomach and intestines, and the skin. Air passage of mercury vapor into the lungs occurs from the chewing action on silver amalgam fillings; inside the house latex paint in which mercury is still used to prolong shelf life; some fungicides and adhesives; and in the air around industrial areas and sewage/waste disposal plants. It is absorbed in the intestines from salt water fish, primarily swordfish, tuna, blue fish, white bass and shark, and by the amount that becomes mixed with saliva during chewing on amalgam fillings. Skin absorption occurs from contact with paints, fungicides cinnabar (used in jewelry), mercurial ointments and antiseptics, some fabric softeners, cosmetics, adhesives, floor waxes and polishes, wood preservatives, broken thermometers, and industrial/occupational exposures.

Blood tests are not reliable ways to check for mercury body accumulation. Hair analysis and a 24-hour urine test in which its release is provoked with a prescription drug called D-Penicillamine or some other chelator are the most reliable ways to check whether high levels of mercury are present in the body.

The list of common symptoms caused by mercury poisoning is a long one: the fatigue you mention is probably the most frequent complaint; then there are low grade fevers; depression, irritability; apprehension; leg cramps; rash; excessive perspiration; rapid heart rate; poor memory and cognition; personality changes; headaches; tremors

of arms, legs, tongue and lips; hyperactivity; muscle weakness, diarrhea, slurred speech; anorexia; weight loss; and kidney inflammation and failure.

Mercury poisoning is something with which I have had a lot of personal experience. Considering the great usage the dental professional has had of this liquid metal (mixing it 50-50 with silver powder for amalgam fillings), you would have thought we who work with it every day would have been more aware of its dangers. Instead, for years we unknowingly misused it tremendously. It spilled on the floor during mixing with the mortar and pestle where its vapor was slowly released into the air. We mixed it in the palm of our hands, and when we ground out silver fillings in the teeth, we breathed the dust. Consequently, I accumulated a lot of mercury in my system and some of its symptoms. The erratic behavior at times of some dentists and our profession's high suicide rate is felt partially to be due to mercury accumulation.

My early work with hair analysis to learn how to better balance patients' mineral levels made me aware of my personal high body content of mercury. Since its discovery, I have used a variety of different methods to reduce the burden in my tissues. These included nutritional methods, certain medications and chelation therapy. It has taken a long time but finally, during March of this year, the amount reduced to almost zero.

The first line of attack is to determine if body mercury levels actually are high, and if so, where it is coming from. Your symptoms could come from other causes but mercury is a very common one.

In treatment, good dietary practices are essential any time a body system is loaded with a poison. In addition, supplements of magnesium, manganese, zinc and copper, plus the protein sulphhydryl amino acids are called for, providing some unusual balances of these substances does not preclude their use. The services of physicians experienced in treating heavy metal poisoning is often required.

Should you have any specific questions, drop me a line about them here at the Ojal Valley News, P.O. Box 277, and enclose your phone number and I will get back to you.

Meinig is right

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