Potential Sources of Mercury In Health Care Facilities

Health care facilities use a variety of products that contain mercury including; thermometers, blood pressure cuffs, fluorescent lamps, batteries, and lab chemicals. Mercury is released from hospitals by: incineration of medical waste; land filling of mercury-containing solid waste; and releases of mercury containing chemicals into wastewater. Hospitals have an opportunity to play a key role in protecting public health and the environment by minimizing the use and release of mercury-containing products and waste. To reduce mercury at your facility consider implementing the following: a program to identify and reduce mercury-containing supplies and equipment, policies regarding the purchase of mercury-containing products and written procedures for spill clean-up and safe disposal of elemental mercury and mercury-containing products and equipment.

Patient Care Equipment

- Mercury thermometers
- Sphygmomanometers
- Button batteries (mercury oxide and mercury zinc) used in pacemakers, hearing aids, etc.
- Weighted esophageal dilators
- Weighted Cantor tubes
- Weighted Miller-Abbott tubes
- Feeding tubes
- Incubator thermostats
- Dental amalgams

Laboratory Chemicals

- Zenker’s Solution
- Thimerosal
- Carbol-fuchin stain
- Carbol gentian violet
- Gram iodine stain
- Merucurochrome
- Immu-sal
- Carmoy-Lebrun
- Shardin
- Takata’s reagent
- Golgi’s
- Alum hematoxylin (Solution A)
- Million’s reagent
- Shardin
- Nessler’s solution
- Phenylmercuric acetate

Laboratory Chemicals cont’d ...

- Mucolex
- Ohlamacher
- Cajal’s
- Camco
- Cesium Internal Std.
- Mecury chloride
- Mercury (II) oxide
- Mercury (II) chloride
- Mercury iodide
- Mercury nitrate
- Mercury sulfate
- Merthiolate
- Channing’s Solution
- B, Fixative
- Helly
- Gomori’s
- Stabilur tablets

Facility Equipment

- Mercury-containing lamps (fluorescent, ultraviolet, HID)
- Thermostats with mercury switches (e.g., non-electronic thermostats)
- Gauges with liquid mercury
- Equipment with mercury switches (e.g., tilt or “silent” switches)
- Displacement/Plunger relay
- Vacuum system (may contain mercury using manometers)
- Flame sensor/safety valve (in gas-fired equipment)