

**Statement/Talking Points**  
**Dr. Helen Binns**  
**News Conference to Announce Health Coalition on Mercury**

On behalf of the many public health and child health advocates in Illinois, I want to commend Governor Blagojevich on his plan to improve the health and developmental potential of Illinois children by reducing mercury pollution. The Governor's plan to reduce mercury pollution from coal plants by 90 percent by June 2009 recognizes our children cannot afford to wait any longer.

For too long, Illinois has allowed the release of mercury into our environment. The mercury gets into our rivers, lakes and streams and becomes concentrated in fish. Pregnant women trying to follow a heart-healthy diet can unknowingly damage their developing fetus simply by eating fish from Illinois waterways. That's wrong and it needs to change.

Mercury pollution poisons children and permanently robs them of their true potential in life. It's not always front-page news because it's hard to see. Pregnant women feel no pain or discomfort from eating fish contaminated with mercury. And the effects on an individual child can be subtle.

For the most part, mercury poisoning is a silent epidemic with widespread and profound impact, because even small shifts in children's abilities have great impact on a society if many children are affected. Doctors agree there is no safe threshold for mercury. So by polluting our environment with mercury, we have poisoned an entire population to various extents.

Thankfully we can do something to protect future generations of Illinois children from mercury pollution. Technology that can reduce mercury pollution from coal plants by more than 90 percent is affordable, readily available and already being used in other states. And thanks to Governor Blagojevich, it will soon be in use in Illinois. The governor's plan will lower the mercury exposure of more than 100,000 women of childbearing age in Illinois whose mercury levels may already be dangerously high.

So today we call on the owners of coal plants in Illinois to get behind the governor's plan to reduce mercury pollution by at least 90 percent by June 2009 by installing modern pollution control technology. By working together, we can create a brighter, healthier future for all Illinois children and their families.

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