



ISSUE OVERVIEW

Mercury is toxic to Illinois children.

- Mercury is a neurotoxin that passes through the placenta and poisons fetal brain development. Every day, thousands of developing fetuses, newborns and young children are exposed to mercury when pregnant and nursing women eat contaminated fish, or children eat fish themselves.
- Exposure to mercury in the early stages of life can cause permanent neurological and brain damage, including reduced cognitive abilities and other developmental problems.
- Up to 10 percent of U.S. women of childbearing age are estimated to have mercury levels high enough to put their developing children at increased risk for developmental problems.

Mercury pollution is poisoning Illinois lakes and rivers.

- Coal plants produce 60 percent of the mercury pollution in Illinois. That pollution ends up in Lake Michigan and the Great Lakes, and in Illinois' inland rivers, lakes and streams. Mercury contamination then works its way up the food chain to poison fish that people eat.
- Fish in Lake Michigan and all Illinois waterways are contaminated with mercury. The Illinois Department of Public Health has issued "fish advisories" warning everyone – particularly pregnant women, women of childbearing age and children – to limit their consumption of fish from Illinois lakes, rivers and streams.
- Illinois ranks 4th for mercury hot spots, areas where the risk to public health is elevated.

The proposed mercury pollution control standards protect our children.

- Illinois has the opportunity to enact strong, responsible mercury pollution control standards to protect the health of future generations by reducing mercury pollution from coal plants.
- The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency has proposed requiring coal plants to install modern technology to reduce mercury pollution by 90 percent by June 30, 2009. This innovative technology is available, affordable and already being used on coal plants in other states.
- The plan will fill a gap left by a new Bush Administration rule on mercury, which accomplishes too little too late. If Illinois fails to act, the Bush rule will perpetuate mercury hot spots in Illinois by allowing coal plants to continue using older technology as well as purchase the right to continue polluting at high levels.

Reducing mercury pollution from coal plants will pay health and economic dividends for years to come.

- Adopting stricter mercury pollution standards for coal plants will lower the mercury exposure of more than 100,000 women of childbearing age in Illinois whose blood mercury levels may exceed the federal recommended limit.
- By investing now to reduce mercury pollution from coal plants, we will protect the health and well being of future generations and reduce the costs of mercury exposure that otherwise would burden the state's economy for years to come.

The following groups have formed a coalition in support of Illinois's plan to reduce mercury pollution from coal plants by 90 percent by June 2009.

(in formation as of June 6, 2006,)

- Access Living
- Action for Children
- Advocate Health Care
- African American HealthCare Council
- Alexian Pediatric Center of Excellence
- Alivio Medical Center
- Alliance for the Great Lakes
- American Academy of Pediatrics, Illinois Chapter
- Asian Health Coalition of Illinois
- Asian Human Services
- Business and Professional People for the Public Interest
- Center for African American Health
- Center for Neighborhood Technology
- Child Care Coalition of Lake County
- Children's Hospital of Illinois
- Citizen Action Illinois
- Citizens Against Ruining the Environment
- Environment Illinois
- Environmental Law & Policy Center
- Faith in Place
- Gilead Outreach and Referral Center
- Health and Medicine Policy Research Group
- Hospitals for a Healthy Environment
- Illinois Academy of Family Physicians
- Illinois Environmental Council
- Illinois Maternal and Child Health Coalition
- Illinois Public Health Association
- La Rabida Children's Hospital
- Little Village Environmental Justice Organization
- March of Dimes, Illinois Chapter
- Medline Industries, Inc.
- Metropolitan Chicago Healthcare Council
- Northern Illinois Public Health Consortium
- Ounce of Prevention Fund
- Physicians for Social Responsibility, Chicago Chapter
- Prairie Rivers Network
- Service Employees International Union, Illinois State Council
- Sierra Club
- Sinai Children's Hospital
- Southeast Environmental Task Force
- Trout Unlimited, Illinois Council
- Voices for Illinois Children
- Women's Business Development Center
- YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago
- Helen Binns, M.D., M.P.H., Director, Pediatric Practice Research Group, Children's Memorial Hospital
- Georgia Davis, M.D. and Associates
- Steve Goldstein, M.D., PhD, Chairman, Pediatrics, The University of Chicago Comer Children's Hospital

Join The Coalition!

To join our coalition supporting Governor Blagojevich's plan to protect children's health and the environment by reducing mercury pollution from Illinois coal plants, call Heather Shadur at 312-226-5100 or email her at heather@shadur.com.

Learn More and Take Action!

To learn more about this issue and send an e-mail to your state legislators, visit www.stopmercurypollution.org.