**BPA**

*What is it?*

BPA, or bisphenol A, is a chemical that is used to harden plastics. It can be found in a variety of different products:

- Water bottles
- Baby bottles
- Sippy cups
- Other products for babies and young children
- Cash register receipts
- Food can linings

*What are the possible risks to health?*

The potential risks of exposure to BPA are still widely unknown, according to the FDA, but there are areas of concern when it comes to BPA's effects on the body. BPA is known to:

- Affect hormone levels
- Increase the risk of certain types of cancer
- Disrupt development in fetuses, babies and children

*How to avoid BPA?*

To avoid exposure to BPA, practice the following steps:

- Find products that are BPA-free, especially children's products such as infant bottles and sippy cups.
- Choose non-plastic containers for food.
- Do not heat plastic that could contain BPA.
- Be sure to throw out plastic containers that are chipped or cracked.
- Avoid plastics with a #3 or #7 recycle code, as these plastics may contain BPA.
**Mercury**

**What is it?**
Mercury has several forms.

- Metallic mercury is the shiny, silvery-white liquid in older thermometers
- Methyl mercury is found in fish as a result of mercury pollution

**What are the risks?**
During pregnancy, if a woman consumes an excess amount of fish with high levels of mercury, the baby’s growing brain and nervous system can be affected. This may result in difficulties with:

- Cognition
- Memory, attention
- Speech and Language
- Fine motor skills and coordination
- Hearing
- Walking
- Muscle strength

**How to avoid mercury exposure?**
When pregnant, be extra careful when consuming fish. The Food and Drug Administration and Environmental Protection Agency recommend an average of 2 fish servings per week. Choose fish low in mercury such as:

- Shrimp
- Crab
- Salmon
- Cod
- Tilapia

If you work in a job where you may be exposed to mercury, talk to your employer about safety precautions. Finally, do not throw away old thermometers or fluorescent light bulbs, as any breakage could result in a release of mercury. These products should be disposed as hazardous waste.

**Lead**

**What is it?**
Lead is a metal chemical that can cause poisoning in the following ways:

- Eating lead contained in dust, dirt or old paint
- Breathing lead in the air
- Drinking water from pipes that contain lead

**What are the risks of exposure to lead?**
Lead is a strong poison that can have dangerous effects on children. Some, but not all of these risks are:

- Brain damage
- Learning and behavior problems
- Stomach troubles
- Loss of appetite
- Headaches
- Constipation
- Hearing loss
- Anemia

**How to avoid exposure to lead?**
- Contact your local health department to find out if there is lead in the drinking water of your community pipes.
- Be wary when it comes to old or imported toys. These toys may contain lead in the plastics or paint.
- If you live in a house built before 1978, have an inspector check your house for lead in your home.
- Avoid purchasing canned goods from other countries.
- Blood tests can be done to measure levels of lead in blood. Ask your doctor about testing for lead. Medicaid and most private insurers cover these.