



HEALTH REPORTS

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LOOKING TO CUT DOWN ON YOUR MERCURY CONSUMPTION? IT'S IN MORE PLACES THAN YOU MAY THINK!

By now, many people know that vaccines often contain forms of mercury as a preservative and that “silver” or amalgam tooth decay fillings are partly made of mercury. And so they avoid those substances.

Those keeping up with news in the field also know that most pediatric vaccines have had the mercury preservative removed. But if a child receives a vaccine not specifically intended for children, he or she may still be exposed to mercury. And it may come as an unpleasant surprise to parents that some other products they use to help their children through illnesses may also contain thimerosal as a preservative!

You have to carefully read the prescribing information, get the Material Data Safety Sheet for a product or ask your pharmacist. A prescription form of neomycin ear drops for swimmer’s ear was found to have thimerosal but could be replaced with a thimerosal-free formula by asking the medical professional to send the prescription to a compounding pharmacy with a request to make it thimerosal-free. The brand name for this preparation is Cortisporin®. The solution is also available as an ophthalmic solution for eye infections as Cortisporin or NeoSporin®.

The list of healthcare products that contain thimerosal is far too long to list here. To cite a few examples:

- Allercan America, Ocuferon Ophthalmic Solution
- Bausch & Lomb, Flurbiprofen Sodium Ophthalmic Solution
- Bristol-Myers Squibb, Fungizone Lotion and Cream
- Federated Foods, Long Acting Nasal Spray
- Major Pharmaceuticals, Cortomycin Otic Suspension
- Pharmedix, Bleph 10 Ophthalmic Solution 10%
- Scrivner, Inc, Hemorrhoid Relief Ointment
- Whitehall-Robins, Dristan 12-Hour Nasal Spray

Some soft contact lens solutions contain thimerosal as a preservative, including some formulations of ReNu Multi Plus. Most preparations described as being for sensitive eyes do not contain thimerosal.

Other products that contain thimerosal include antivenin such as that used for snake bites or black widow bites. It appears that manufacturers are replacing the current stocks with thimerosal-free formulas when the shelf date on the antivenins run out. In the case of the pit viper antivenin manufactured by Wyeth, a patient could receive as much as 4.7 milligrams of mercury in the course of treatment, depending on how many vials of antivenin they receive. The current supply will last for several years, until each lot reaches its expiration date.

The best way to avoid thimerosal/mercury exposure for you and your family is to work with your pharmacist and doctor. Tell them that you (or someone in your family) is sensitive to thimerosal and for them to help you acquire a thimerosal-free formula.

Source: Thimerosal in Vaccines, November 6, 2009, <http://www.fda.gov/BiologicsBloodVaccines/SafetyAvailability/VaccineSafety/ucm096228.htm#t1>

Source: Mercury in Plasma-Derived Products, July 10, 2009, <http://www.fda.gov/BiologicsBloodVaccines/SafetyAvailability/BloodSafety/ucm095529.htm>

Source: Common Sources of Ethylmercury, December 18, 2009, <http://www.anapsid.org/cnd/diffdx/mercurysources.html>

Source: Mercury in Drug and Biologic Products, June 13, 2006, <http://www.fda.gov/RegulatoryInformation/Legislation/FederalFoodDrugandCosmeticActFDCAAct/SignificantAmendmentstotheFDCAAct/FDAMA/ucm100218.htm>