



Cleaning Up Mercury Spills in the Home

What should I do if there is a metallic (elemental) mercury spill in my home?

You can clean up small mercury spills in your home (for example, if a thermometer breaks). If a larger amount of mercury spills in your home, call **311** to report the spill and to get guidance on clean-up.

For any size spill, first take these steps:

- Keep people, especially children, away from the spill
- Open windows to ventilate the room
- Avoid spreading mercury around the home

To clean up a small spill:

- Use these materials for the cleanup: stiff paper (e.g. index cards), sticky tape, wet paper towels, plastic bags that seal, and a flashlight. Use disposable gloves if you have them.
- Never use a vacuum or broom to clean up the spill. Vacuums and brooms can spread the mercury around the home and increase mercury vapor in the air.
- Remove jewelry before clean-up (mercury can ruin jewelry).
- Mercury spills on carpets, rugs, upholstery or floors with cracks are more difficult to clean up and may require professional cleaning services.
- Carefully pick up any broken glass, wrap the ends with tape and put into a plastic bag.
- Scoop up larger droplets using stiff paper and place in plastic bag.
- Use the sticky tape or wet paper towels to pick up smaller mercury droplets.
- Shine a flashlight around the area to find any droplets that you may have missed. When the area looks clean, wipe down with wet paper towels.
- Place mercury droplets into a plastic bag along with any other materials you used to clean up the spill. Seal all waste in a single bag.
- Wash your hands with soap and water.
- Call **311** and ask for the Department of Sanitation to find out how to dispose of the mercury. Do not put mercury down a sink, a drain, in the toilet or in the regular garbage.

If a larger amount of mercury spills in your home, call 311 to report the spill.

Do I need a medical test if there is a mercury spill in my home?

If you clean up a small mercury spill quickly, you do not need to be tested for mercury exposure. After a larger spill, you and your doctor may decide that you should be tested. A urine sample is used to test for metallic (elemental) mercury exposure. The [New York State Department of Health](#) will contact you if your urine mercury level is elevated (at or above 20 micrograms per liter) and will talk with you about how to lower your level.