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Feb **Got Drain Damage?**

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When I was a kid and was really, *really* bored, I amused myself by holding a thermometer up to the heater in the bathroom (before you judge me, understand that I was living in a tiny town in Oklahoma with very few entertainment options).

After watching the temperature go up and down several times, I decided to see what would happen if I just held it there until it went all the way up. The result was that the end of the thermometer broke and the mercury spilled onto the floor. While it might sound like I wasn't very bright, I at least had enough sense not to touch the mercury when cleaning it up. And a good thing, too, since **mercury exposure is bad news**, as it leads to an increased risk of severe health problems and neurological symptoms, including memory loss, personality change, tremors, spontaneous abortion, and damage to a developing fetus. Fun stuff, huh?

Of course, broken thermometers aren't the main cause of mercury poisoning. Any guesses? That's right: Eating fish is. A writer for Salon.com **memorably called fish** "the pathway of mercury to our bloodstreams." Long story short: Burning coal releases mercury into the air. The mercury then cools and falls into the water, where it is transformed by bacteria into even-more-toxic methylmercury, which works its way up the aquatic food chain to the "Captain's Platter" at your local seafood restaurant.

The good news? The Obama administration has **announced its intention** to take action to cut mercury pollution. The not-so-good news? That's only half the battle.

That's why we're letting people know that they can block mercury poisoning right now by cutting out fish. Our new "Got Drain Damage?" billboard, shown here, has just gone up in Madison, Wisconsin, because of concerns about mercury in **fish from local waters**. But even if you don't live in Wisconsin, don't think you're off the hook: The fish you buy in the supermarket can come from anywhere, including waters teeming with mercury, DDT, PCBs, and other toxins.



I'm just glad I learned to stay away from fish—and thermometers—so Mensa won't come and take away my membership card.

Posted by Jeff Mackey

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