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**YOUR TEETH MAY BE POISONING FISH YOU EAT**

***“Earth Day” Report Shows Real Cost of Dental Mercury Fillings***

WASHINGTON April 16 – Dental mercury fillings pollute the environment, contaminate fish and are far more costly for taxpayers than the alternative tooth-colored material, according to a new study released today by a broad coalition of health, consumer and environmental groups.[[1]](#endnote-1)

“The report’s findings confirm that amalgam is not the least expensive when the so-called ‘external costs’ are factored in,” said Michael Bender, Director of the Mercury Policy Project. “And use is still prevalent. Using data from the American Dental Association, the report found that 32 tons of dental mercury is used annually in the U.S., twice that of current estimates.[[2]](#endnote-2)”

The study was prepared by Brussels-based Concorde East/West Sprl, an international consulting firm that provides research to the UN and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), among others. It details how society pays for dental mercury through additional pollution control costs, deterioration of public resources, and the health effects associated with mercury contamination.

"The best way to keep mercury out of our water and out of the fish we eat is to stop it from getting there in the first place," says Cyndi Luppi, New England Director for Clean Water Action. "That's just common sense. This study shows the economics are on our side, too."

The report shows that when the real cost to taxpayers and the environment is considered, amalgam is significantly more costly than composite as a filling material, by at least $41 more per filling.

“It is taxpayers who foot the bill for dental mercury in the environment, which goes uncontrolled into our water, air and land,” said Charlie Brown, National Counsel, Consumers for Dental Choice. “Dental mercury contaminates fish, which in turn presents a neurological exposure risk to pregnant women and children, in particular.”

In 2010, EPA announced plans to propose a dental mercury pollution control rule, stating that:

“…approximately 50 percent of mercury entering local waste treatment plants comes from dental amalgam waste. Once deposited, certain microorganisms can change elemental mercury into methylmercury, a highly toxic form that builds up in fish, shellfish and animals that eat fish.”[[3]](#endnote-3)

The groups note that EPA has yet to propose its rule, however.

“Amalgam has already been nearly phased out in many countries, including the Nordic countries, Germany, Italy, Japan and even Mongolia and Vietnam,” said Dr. Nestor Shapka of the International Academy of Oral Medicine & Toxicology, with members in 14 countries. “People living in these countries recognize that mercury-free dental fillings are readily available, affordable and effective.”

The Concorde East/West report contributes to current global talks to reduce dental mercury use, including a World Health Organization report,[[4]](#endnote-4) an EU draft report to phase out amalgam by 2018.[[5]](#endnote-5)

In summary, the environmental concerns and indirect health risks from dental mercury releases all show the need for an amalgam phase out. Yet now another clear reason is provided: amalgam is far from being a bargain and is in fact significantly more costly than mercury-free fillings.

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Access report on *Real Cost of Dental Mercury* at: [www.mercurypolicy.org](http://www.mercurypolicy.org) and [www.iaomt.org](http://www.iaomt.org)

For more information, see: [www.cleanwater.org](http://www.cleanwater.org), [www.toxicteeth.org](http://www.toxicteeth.org), [www.zeromercury.org](http://www.zeromercury.org)

**ENDNOTES**

1. **Coalition includes: Clean Water Action**, a national group with 1 million members, protects water and health, from watershed to water tap, and has been active on mercury pollution prevention for more than 25 years. **Consumers for Dental Choice** was founded in 1996 and its goal is to phase out the use of amalgam, a 50% mercury product. **The Mercury Policy Project** works to promote policies to eliminate mercury uses, reduce releases, export and exposures of mercury at the local, national, and international levels. The **International Academy of Oral Medicine &** **Toxicology** is a network of dental, medical and research professionals who seek to raise the standards of scientific biocompatibility in the dental practice with information from the latest interdisciplinary research. The **European Environmental Bureau’s Zero Mercury Campaign** project’s ultimate objective is ‘Zero’ emissions, demand and supply of mercury, from all sources we can control, in view of reducing to a minimum, mercury in the environment at EU level and globally. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Interstate Mercury Education and Reduction Clearinghouse website: [www.newmoa.org/prevention/mercury/imerc/factsheets/dental\_amalgam.pdf](http://www.newmoa.org/prevention/mercury/imerc/factsheets/dental_amalgam.pdf). IMERC members include CT, LA, ME, MA, NH, NY, RI, and VT. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. “EPA Press Release 09/27/2010”; http://yosemite.epa.gov/opa/admpress.nsf/d0cf6618525a9efb85257359003fb69d/a640db2ebad201cd852577ab00634848!OpenDocument [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. WHO 2011 Report, http://www.who.int/oral\_health/publications/dental\_material\_2011.pdf [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. http://ec.europa.eu/environment/chemicals/mercury/pdf/BIO\_Draft%20final%20report.pdf [↑](#endnote-ref-5)