



I'll Take My Food *Without Mercury*, Thanks

By Nicole A. Whitehead, D.C., C.A.C.C.P.

High Fructose Corn Syrup (HFCS) is an ingredient found in many, if not most, of modern pre-packaged foods. Soft drinks, juices, cookies, crackers, and cereals (to name a few) contain HFCS. It has long been known that HFCS can contribute to obesity and diseases such as diabetes. Nutrition-savvy families have been reading labels and avoiding HFCS for a long time. However, many families and children consume tremendous amounts of this ingredient everyday.

In January 2009, a new study was released in the science journal *Environmental Health*, which indicates that HFCS may be an even bigger threat than everyone thought. The processes used to make HFCS utilize mercury. In theory, these processes should not leach mercury into the items being made. However, it has been discovered that several TONS of mercury are missing from these plants every year!

This observation led some researchers to wonder if some of the mercury was ending up in the HFCS. In the study released in January, researchers took samples of HFCS directly from several manufacturing plants. **45% (9 of 20) of the HFCS samples contained detectable levels of mercury.** This is HFCS that would then be used as an ingredient in food!

Although this is a small, preliminary study, the idea of mercury being present in food that makes up the majority of the American diet is mortifying! Mercury is a potent toxin, especially to babies, children, and fetuses in utero. Years of research and lobbying have resulted in mercury being removed from vaccines due to the potential danger of exposure. Now, it looks like we might be ingesting it all the time.

More research needs to be done to understand the scope of this apparent contamination of our food. In the meantime, I am strongly recommending that people **READ LABELS** and avoid foods containing HFCS. It is an ingredient that is poor for your health anyway, and if mercury contamination turns out to be widespread, you will have done yourself a huge favor.

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