



Health Provider Alert

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Severe Methyl Mercury Poisoning Linked to Adulterated Mexican Face Cream

A Sacramento-area woman has been hospitalized in a semi-comatose state after using a Mexican Pond's cream that contained methyl mercury. The mercury was not added by Pond's but by a third party. She purchased the cream through informal networks in Sacramento to remove blemishes and wrinkles.

This is the first time this extremely dangerous form of mercury was found in a face cream in the United States. There have been over 60 California poisonings linked to foreign brand, unlabeled, and/or artisanal skin creams in the last decade that contained the less toxic form of mercury, mercurous chloride or calomel. Calomel can still cause severe illness in adults and children, but is not as profoundly dangerous as methyl mercury.



Mexican Pond's cream adulterated with methyl mercury in 2019

If your patients use skin creams from Mexico, urge them to:

- If the cream was not purchased from a major retailer, stop using it immediately
- Place the creams in a closed sealable bag
- Contact the California Department of Public Health at (510) 981-4354 or email AskEHIB@cdph.ca.gov
- See other [Face Creams Containing Mercury](#) found in California

Mercury poisoning signs and symptoms can be non-specific, but may include those in the table below. If patients are using a suspect cream, CDPH recommends conducting a total mercury analysis in blood and urine.

General Signs and Symptoms	Children with prolonged exposure
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Difficulty concentrating, memory loss• Nervousness, irritability, anxiety• Depression, insomnia• Headaches, Hypertension• Weight loss, fatigue• Shaking, tremors, paresthesias, ataxia• Numbness or tingling in hands, feet, lips	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pink hands and feet, flaking skin• Excessive saliva or thirst, gum disease (gingivitis)• Irritability, poor appetite• Poor muscle tone, leg cramps• High blood pressure• Rash

For more information: Contact California Poison Control at 1-800-222-1222 for guidance on medical management. See the full [CDPH Health Alert](#). Contact CDPH: Leave a message at (510) 981-4354, email AskEHIB@cdph.ca.gov, or visit [Mercury in Skin Creams](#) web page for educational materials in English and Spanish.