

MERCURY BIOMONITORING PROJECT

Information for Participants



What is the Mercury BioMonitoring Project?

The Mercury BioMonitoring Project is a surveillance project that aims to collect information about mercury levels in women of child-bearing age living in Martin County. This project is being conducted by the Martin County Health Department, as part of the Florida Department of Health's Environmental Public Health Tracking Program.



What is mercury?

Mercury is a metal found naturally in the environment that has many different forms. It is also found in air and waterways as a result of industrial pollution. One type of mercury, called methylmercury, is absorbed by fish. Methylmercury can be passed on to people who eat fish.



What are the health effects of mercury?

High levels of mercury can cause health problems in humans, especially in pregnant women and young children. Methylmercury affects the nervous system and can cause a variety of neurological effects depending on the dose of exposure. Such effects include impaired coordination, vision, memory, and neurological development.



What can I expect if I participate in this project?

To participate in this project, you must be a female, 18-49 years of age and have resided in Martin County for at least one year. Participation is completely voluntary, and there is no charge. Participants will complete a short questionnaire and submit a hair sample. It will take about 15 minutes of your time, and you will receive a copy of your lab results.



Why are you collecting hair?

Mercury is incorporated into hair as it grows, and it remains in hair for a long time. The level of mercury in human hair can give us information about exposure to mercury in the diet. For this project, we will need about 100 strands of hair per participant for laboratory testing.



How will this information be used?

Results from this project will:

- 1) Describe mercury levels among women living in Martin County
- 2) Allow for comparison of local mercury levels to other areas/states
- 3) Provide information to help you make decisions about your diet
- 4) Be kept confidential to protect your privacy



Who can I contact for more information?

Serina Jones, Martin County Health Department (772-221-4090).

