

Heavy Metal Toxicity and the Unborn Child

by Janine Bowring

The topic of heavy metal toxicity became a personal quest for answers when my son was diagnosed with epilepsy at age three. He began to have grand mal seizures that came out of nowhere and were horrifying to me as a first-time mother. Being a naturopathic doctor, I quickly became a detective to determine why he was having seizures. Knowing that most disease comes from some form of toxicity, I wondered what he was exposed to that was so toxic. It dawned on me that the source was not his exposure, but what I had inadvertently passed to him in the womb and through my breast milk. Looking back at my history I realized that I had received a high level of exposure to pesticides in my teens while working on a fruit farm. Pesticides and fungicides contain heavy metals.

I had my hair analyzed and my son had hair and stool analysis for heavy metals. The results confirmed that my suspicions were correct. Thankfully, after eight months of detoxification, my son never had a seizure again.

What Is a Heavy Metal?

A heavy metal is defined as any metallic chemical element that has a high density and is poisonous at a lower concentration. Many heavy metals exist naturally in our surrounding ecosystems and generally are not a problem in small concentrations. However, with industrialization, heavy metals are contained in many products we use daily and have leached into our food. Our exposure to these low to moderate amounts of metals over long periods of time can cause ill effects on our health.

How Are Heavy Metals Harmful?

Heavy metals are especially toxic to a growing fetus. Unfortunately, heavy metals are not filtered by the placenta from mother to child and are directly deposited in growing

fetal tissues. Heavy metals also pass through breast milk. During fetal growth, and then later in infancy, the youngster's vital organs are not yet efficient enough to filter and detoxify these heavy metals. Adult organs have difficulty dumping heavy metals, so imagine an immature nervous system and liver that are challenged from day one to eliminate these toxins.

One of the main problems with heavy metals is their ability to bio-accumulate. Bio-accumulation means the metals do not leave the body by their own accord; instead they accumulate in certain tissues. Due to bio-accumulation, heavy metals are passed up the food chain from smaller species (fish) to humans.

The main tissues targeted by heavy metals include the liver, kidneys, bowel, brain and nervous system, spleen and eyes. The metals will not be cleared by the system unless some type of intervention is used to chelate the metals and flush them out. Some heavy metal toxicities are more prevalent than others, like mercury from dental fillings and mercury and aluminum in vaccinations.

The Vaccine Link

Thimerosal is a preservative in many childhood vaccines that is 49.5 % ethyl mercury by weight. Mercury is toxic, especially to infants and young children. Recent studies have shown a link between autism and thimerosal exposure in children who have difficulty with mercury. Many vaccines also contain aluminum, another heavy metal that has an affinity for the brain and potential effects on neural development.

Unfortunately, the issue of vaccination is very controversial. Even more alarming is that most people and unsuspecting parents do not even know of the controversy and risks surrounding vaccination.

Detoxification

I encourage all women who are planning to have children to detoxify before con-

ception. The average time I suggest is six months to a year before conception. The length of time for eliminating toxins varies dramatically from person to person based on the level of toxicity and the efficiency of the organs in detoxification.

Detoxification of heavy metals is a three step process. First and foremost, the source of toxicity must be identified and removed. If the source of heavy metals cannot be determined, adopting a healthy lifestyle and avoiding toxins as much as possible is the best alternative.

Secondly, the organs of excretion must be "opened" for detoxification. The main organs of excretion for heavy metals include: liver, kidneys, lungs, digestive tract and skin. If these organs are not excreting efficiently during the metal detoxification process, the individual may become more toxic and experiencing more symptoms of this.

Liver. A simple way to encourage the detoxification of the liver is to drink the juice of $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ fresh lemon in warm water first thing in the morning. Herbal and homeopathic medicines are also readily available for liver detoxification.

Kidneys. To detoxify the kidneys, drink at least one litre of water per day and urinate frequently. Sipping small amounts of water throughout the day, rather than gulping a lot at one sitting, is important since only 2 ounces of water can be absorbed at once. Herbal medicines such as dandelion leaves, corn silk and horsetail cleanse the kidneys.

Lungs. Lungs can be detoxified by deep breathing exercises. Most of us only use the top $\frac{1}{3}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ of our lung capacity. Use the entire lung while breathing to exchange as much stale air as possible with each breath. Exercises like yoga and Pilates are wonderful because they incorporate proper breathing and train the lungs to detoxify.

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A Call to Action: Vaginal Birth After Cesarean (VBAC) in Crisis in Florida

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Digestive Tract. The bowels can be detoxified by increasing the amount of fibre in the diet. There are two types of fibre, soluble and insoluble. Both are important for health, digestion, and preventing diseases. Soluble fiber slows digestion and helps the body absorb vital nutrients from foods. It can be found in dried peas and beans, psyllium seed, barley, oranges and apples. Insoluble fiber adds bulk to the stool, helping foods pass more quickly through the stomach and intestines. It can be found in wheat bran, flax seed, green beans, cauliflower and fruit and root vegetable skins.

Increasing the number of bowel movements per day is imperative when detoxifying heavy metals. I usually recommend that patients aim for at least two bowel movements daily while on a heavy metal detoxification protocol.

Skin. The skin, as the largest detoxification organ, eliminates heavy metals through perspiration. Perspiration can be induced through exercise or by the use of far infrared (FIR) saunas. FIR saunas are reported to have better detoxifying effects than traditional saunas and steam rooms.

Lastly, chelation is necessary to remove the metals from the body. Chelation means binding of a substance to the heavy metal so it can be excreted from the body. There

are two types of chelation therapy, intravenous and oral. I prefer oral chelation because it is easy to administer and most of the heavy metals are excreted via the bowel. Intravenous chelation usually causes excretion via the kidneys.

Detoxification of heavy metals is best undertaken with the guidance of a naturopathic doctor who has experience in this field. Heavy metals may be eliminated too quickly, causing a variety of side effects that can be unpleasant.

Editor's Note: For more detailed information on heavy metal toxicity see Dr. Bowring's article in the August issue of *Positive Health Magazine* at www.positivehealth.com. For more information on mercury toxicity, see "Mercury Rising: Warnings in Pregnancy and Infancy" by Jeanne Ohm in *Midwifery Today*, 74: 46-47, 68.



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Cards and Letters

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homeostasis there would be no Earth, there would be no existence and the species now known as "humankind" would never have evolved.

If we turn our backs on nature, we turn our backs on the elemental forces that created this planet and every living creature that walks upon it. Every day the human species evolves, but it seems with every we take forward, we destroy the very reason for our existence and deny ourselves our real power, a power that lives deep within each and every one of us. That power brought us this far, but for some reason at times we deny that it even exists.

By the way, I am the mother of two sons, for those who wondered, and labour does hurt—it really hurts—but the strength I felt after my second one was delivered has stayed with me to this day. I understand that things can go wrong; my first labour was very difficult. However, very often nothing is going wrong and still we interfere, or worse, we deny ourselves the real experience and the point to being a woman and a mother.

Wendy Richert
Sidcup Kent, England

Dear Midwifery Today Family,
Although human I am faced with the limits my species puts on communicating my response to my experience at this conference (2005 Bahamas conference).

This weekend I felt as though I have come home. Home is a safe, loving space where ideas and words are expected, challenged, accepted and received.

Home is where love is freely exchanged and felt in one's spiritual core. Home is where touch, hugs and eyes caress the mind, heart and body.

Home is just that: *home*.

Thank you for bringing the best of the best yet again to fill my mind and to challenge my soul.

Love and compassion are keys to our trade. I feel as though I have learned from the bosom of midwifery.

My joy is inexpressible.

Thank you for these *gifts*.

Demetria Clark
Springfield, Vermont
US



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