



Compact Fluorescent Light Bulbs: Did you know they contain mercury?

Compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFL) can:

- Last up to 10 times longer than regular light bulbs and;
- Save you \$30 in energy costs over the life of the bulb

BUT, did you also know?

- CFLs contain small amounts of **mercury**.

Should you be concerned? Yes.

- As with other light bulbs, CFLs can break if dropped or roughly handled. If broken, consumers may be exposed to mercury vapor.
- Recent studies have found that small mercury spills in an enclosed space at room temperature (such as a room inside a home) can result in dangerous levels of mercury vapor.

Is mercury harmful? Yes.

- Mercury has long been known to be poisonous to humans, with children and fetuses (unborn babies) being the most vulnerable. Exposure to mercury from bulbs occurs primarily through breathing the vapor when the bulbs break.
- Effects of high exposures to mercury include tremors, mood changes, and slowed nerve function. Long-term exposure to mercury can permanently damage the brain and kidneys, and decrease fetal survival.

Should you use CFLs? Yes.

DO use CFLs:

- In ceiling / overhead lamps
- Wall sconces

BUT Do NOT use CFLs:

- In floor and table lamps
- In areas where children frequently play

What should I do if I break a CFL?

DO NOT USE A VACUUM OR BROOM TO CLEAN UP A BROKEN CFL. Doing so may cause mercury powder and vapor to become airborne and increases chances of exposure.

- (1) Isolate the room by closing interior doors and open any windows. People and pets should leave immediately for at least 15 min;
- (2) Glass fragments and powder should be scooped up using disposable stiff paper or cardboard and placed in a sealable glass jar. Use disposable gloves if possible;
- (3) Sticky tape (e.g. duct tape) should be used to pick up remaining small fragments and powder;
- (4) The areas should be wiped with damp paper towels or disposable wet wipes and placed in the glass jar;
- (5) Place the sealed glass jar in a plastic bag outside immediately;
- (6) Wash hands;
- (7) Continue to ventilate for several hours; keep children and pets away from area for several days.

Detailed information is available from the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA):

<http://www.epa.gov/mercury/spills/index.htm>

Contact your local public health department for disposal of broken and intact CFLs.