

# Mercury Facts for Students

Want to learn about mercury? Let's start with the basics.

## 5 quick facts about mercury:

1. Mercury is a metal that is found naturally in oceans, rocks, and soils. It comes in a few different forms.
2. Elemental (or metallic) mercury is a shiny, silver-colored liquid.
3. If it spills, liquid mercury can turn into poisonous vapors (fumes).
4. Breathing in mercury vapors can make you very sick.
5. Even though we know that it's dangerous, mercury can still be found today in some light bulbs, thermometers, and batteries.



Sometimes people call mercury "quicksilver" because it looks so much like liquid silver.



## Did you know?

- Mercury is the only metal on earth that is **liquid at room temperature**.
- Liquid mercury is so slippery that it will **fall off your skin** if you try to hold it.
- It is so heavy that 2 tablespoons of mercury **weighs about one pound!**

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## What happens when someone gets mercury poisoning?

When a person breathes in mercury vapors, the poisons can go to the brain — which means it can be dangerous. If mercury damages your brain, it can make you:

- Feel grumpy all the time
- Feel shy or nervous
- Make you tremble (shake)
- Have trouble hearing
- Have trouble remembering things

To learn more about how mercury can harm your body, visit [www.atsdr.cdc.gov/dontmesswithmercury/](http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/dontmesswithmercury/)

## Ever wonder how the Mad Hatter in Alice in Wonderland got his name?

In the 1800s, hat makers started using a form of mercury to help make the wool in hats feel softer. Since they didn't know mercury was dangerous, many hat makers were poisoned. When brain damage from mercury poisoning made them act strangely, people started using the phrase "mad as a hatter" to mean a crazy person.



Check out this timeline to learn more about how mercury has been used throughout history.

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don't mess with **MERCURY**