

Let's mention a bit about our environment. I love it, and so does my bride of 35 years. We often find time in a new area to explore the great outdoors, and if it suits us, we hike it. Sea coast or mountains, it makes no difference, but we do have favorite places. With some luck, time and effort, we have been able to explore other countries, too. But we spend most of our time at home. We built it, share it, and find peace and comfort in a simple environment. But when I got mercury poisoning over ten years ago, and realize I am fighting an enemy I cannot see, taste, or feel, the word "clueless" creeps into my thinking to sum up the characteristics of heavy metal poisons and other toxins. My safe haven called home, I decide, needs to be looked at from a different perspective.

First, what about the food and water we bring into our home. I have identified areas in *Diary of A Poisoned Pharmacist* and *-Heavy Metal Poisoning, Identification, and Oral Treatment Considerations for Adults-*, where water and food sources become contaminated, especially with arsenic, cadmium, lead, and mercury. My first consideration in my home is our water supply. Where does it come from? Is it protected? If it has problems, what am I doing about it to protect my bride and myself (the kids left our house long ago)? Our water, I found, is protected and rated by the city. (The city just won a \$22 million law suit against Shell Oil against the spill of their TCP [trichloropropane] near our water supply. TCP causes cancer, kidney and liver damage.) No fluoride is in the mix either. Good! When we moved in 14 years ago, we installed a soft water system for washing and bathing, and a reverse osmosis filtering system for drinking purposes. Our refrigerator requires a water filter change every six months. Good thinking, right? So I thought, until I had both systems checked for possible problems a few years ago. Our reverse osmosis filtered drinking water passed with great results! However, our soft water system revealed a problem. This system is exceeding the desired level of copper presence by a factor of FIVE according to the EPA. Even though the water tastes a bit salty, it now exceeds the EPA level for safe copper by five times of what it should be. Not good. Why? Because the average house has a lot of copper tubing for water dispersion (the soft water system, too) to sinks, washers, and toilets. The salt concentration for water softening is eating away at the copper pipes. Presto, we are exposed to a higher concentration than the human host can tolerate. That is, if we drink it. We are not. Still, the human body can absorb a lot of chemicals, toxins, heavy metals through the skin. Not good. Is the EPA looking into this? I doubt it. But if I accidentally break a conventional light bulb in my house, I have created a chemical toxic spill that the EPA ideally needs to clean up to make my house mercury free because of the heavy metal now contaminating my floor and potentially the rest of the house. Will I call the EPA? No, because I didn't think about the broken bulb as a toxic spill problem, only an inconvenient mess to be cleaned up the best we can. Mercury in the bulb? Who put mercury in the bulb?

Safe water is important to all of us. The EPA released a report not long ago stating that all the U.S. lakes, rivers and streams are polluted by mercury and other heavy metals. Some areas are worse than others. Fish and other living creatures, and

aquatic plants are taking the hit. Anglers are cheated also, because now their catch is tainted to a certain degree with heavy metals, mostly mercury thought to be filtered through our atmosphere from coal firing plants to produce electricity but dropping mercury in the process (firing plants have now reduced a lot of this pollution). Apparently dentists and their patients add to this mix. The patient gets a silver amalgam dental filling containing 50% mercury. Most goes into the filling, some into the patient who excretes the mercury via urine and feces for several days after the procedure, filling our sewer system with a bit of a mercury spill. And this is only a single patient. So where does this tainted heavy metal sewer waste go? Most dentists do not trap their mercury left-overs either. It, too, finds its way to our sewers. If by chance the mercury stays in the sludge mass, what do we do with the now tainted sludge mass? If you use it as a fertilizer, the growing plants will trap the offending heavy metals into their systems. If we end up eating these same plants (animals, too), we are potentially exposing ourselves again to heavy metal poisoning over time. In short, we are contributing to “the circle of life” mentioned in Disney’s *Lion King* with heavy metal poisoning to end our life spans sooner instead of later. In my Introduction writing, this figure could affect 80 million lives in the U.S. alone, with our flowering youth suffering too.

As I said, my wife and I love the great outdoors, but what the hell are we doing to it? None of us have the right to be brain dead while this is going on. Let’s get smart! Our kids deserve better; so do our animals and pets.