

This worksheet will help you learn more about mercury in our environment.

1. What unique challenges does mercury present to scientists?

2. What is the red rock called where mercury is found?

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## Bioaccumulation of Mercury

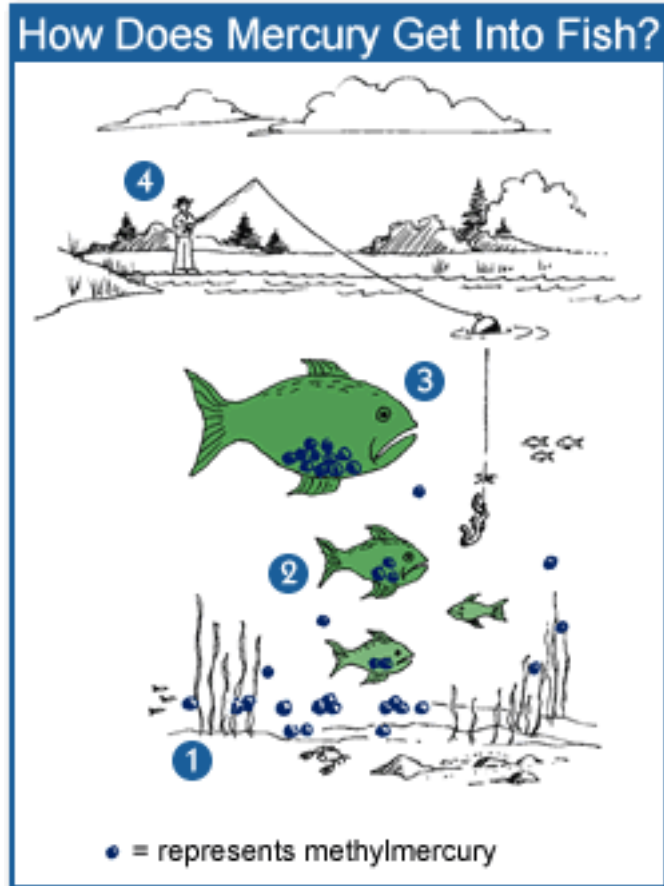
Once in a lake or river, mercury is converted to methylmercury by bacteria and other processes. Fish absorb methylmercury from their food and from water as it passes over their gills. Mercury is tightly bound to proteins in all fish tissue, including muscle. There is no method of cooking or cleaning fish that will reduce the amount of mercury in a meal.

Methylmercury accumulates as you move up the food chain:

1. Methylmercury in the water and sediment is taken up by tiny animals and plants known as plankton.
2. Small fishes eat large quantities of plankton over time.

3. Large predatory fish consume many smaller fish, accumulating methylmercury in their tissues. The older and larger the fish, the greater the potential for high mercury levels in their bodies.

4. Fish are caught and eaten by humans and animals, causing methylmercury to accumulate in their tissues.



Credit: <http://www.mercvt.org/envIRON/bi 1>

