

News Release

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Contact: Andrea Sandoval
SandovalA@Saccounty.net
Phone: 916-591-9730

Sacramento Woman in Coma after Using Cream Tainted with Mercury

SACRAMENTO, Calif. – A Sacramento woman is currently in the hospital in a semi-comatose state after using a Pond's-labeled skin cream tainted with methylmercury. This is the first reported case of methylmercury poisoning of this type linked to a skin cream in the United States. The woman obtained the skin cream through an informal network that imported the cream from Mexico. This type of cream is used by consumers as a skin lightener and to remove spots and wrinkles. The mercury was not added by the Pond's manufacturer, but by a third party after purchase.

["Sacramento County Public Health](#) urges the community to immediately stop using similar skin creams imported from Mexico due to the risk of contamination with methylmercury," said Sacramento County Public Health Officer Dr. Olivia Kasirye. "Methylmercury is extremely dangerous to adults and children."



Sacramento County Public Health is working closely with the California Department of Public Health to test similar creams in the Sacramento-area for methylmercury. Methylmercury can enter the nervous system and can also cause severe illness among household contacts, especially in pregnant and breastfeeding women and children. Signs and symptoms include the following:

General Signs and Symptoms

- Difficulty concentrating, memory loss
- Nervousness, irritability, anxiety
- Depression, insomnia
- Headaches
- Weight loss, fatigue
- Tremors, numbness or tingling in hands, feet, or around the lips

Children with prolonged exposure

- Pink hands and feet
- Skin flaking
- Excessive saliva or thirst, gum disease
- Irritability, poor appetite
- Poor muscle tone, leg cramps
- High blood pressure, rash

In California, over the last nine years there, have been over 60 poisonings linked to foreign brand, unlabeled, and/or homemade skin creams that contained the less toxic form of mercury, mercurous chloride or calomel.

For those who use imported skin creams from Mexico:

- Stop using them immediately
- Put the cream in a closed Ziploc bag and bring to your doctor
- Go to the doctor and get tested for mercury in your blood and urine
- Contact CDPH at (510) 981-4354 or AskEHIB@cdph.ca.gov

For free medical advice in English or other languages, call California Poison Control at 1-800-222-1222

[For more information or to view a list of skin creams that have been tested and confirmed to have mercury, click here.](#)

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