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Most Americans Surprised, Concerned that 90 Percent of Flu Shots Contain the Toxin Mercury

Health Officials' Aggressive Flu Shot Campaign May Disregard Safety, According to Survey of 9,000 Americans

76 Percent of Respondents Unaware Flu Shots Contain Mercury, 77 Percent Disagree with CDC about Vaccinating Pregnant Women and Children

PORTLAND, OR – As health officials step up their effort to vaccinate Americans against the flu, a new survey suggests serious concerns over the toxin mercury, an ingredient in over 90 percent of this season's flu shot supply. PutChildrenFirst.org, a parent-led organization advocating vaccine safety, commissioned a survey of over 9,000 Americans to learn their plans for getting flu shots, their knowledge of its ingredients, and who they hold responsible for making sure vaccines are safe.

The survey revealed that the overwhelming majority of Americans were unaware that most flu shots contain mercury and that they would refuse a shot with mercury. ([See page two for the key findings.](#))

“More than 75 percent of Americans feel a mercury-containing flu shot should not be given to a pregnant woman or a child, despite recommendations from medical authorities to do just that,” said Lisa Handley, a founding parent of PutChildrenFirst.org. Her own son, Jamison, had an adverse reaction to a flu shot containing mercury in 2003. “I know firsthand how life-changing a flu shot with mercury can be, since our son began his regression into autism after his flu shot.”

In 1999, government agencies called for the removal of Thimerosal, the mercury-based preservative in most vaccines. Then, in 2001, the American Academy of Pediatrics stated that, “mercury in all of its forms is toxic to the fetus and children, and efforts should be made to reduce exposure to the extent possible to pregnant women and children as well as the general population.” Despite these actions, 90 percent of this season's flu vaccines still contain Thimerosal, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) are recommending the vaccine for pregnant women and children six months and older.

These recommendations come on the heels of recent studies that reveal new findings about the neurological effects of mercury and question the effectiveness of flu shots. Mercury, the second most toxic element after plutonium, is estimated to be 500 to 1,000 times more toxic than lead.

“A common myth is that Thimerosal is added to vaccines in ‘trace’ amounts.” said Mike Wagnitz, a Senior Chemist at the University of Wisconsin. “The concentration of mercury in a multi-dose flu vaccine vial is 50,000 parts per billion. To put this in perspective, drinking water cannot exceed 2 parts per billion of mercury, and waste is considered hazardous if it has only 200 parts per billion. Is it really safe then to inject pregnant women, newborns, and infants with levels of mercury 250 times higher than what is legally classified as hazardous waste?”

Agreeing that mercury has no place in vaccines, seven states have passed Thimerosal bans in recent years: California, Delaware, Illinois, Iowa, Missouri, New York, and Washington. California is the first to have

implemented the ban for the current flu season, but Governor Schwarzenegger temporarily overturned the ban on November 2 after a shortage of mercury-free flu shots led to pressure from state medical groups.

“Parents need to be informed about all aspects of their children’s healthcare, including vaccines,” said Deirdre Imus, President and founder of The Deirdre Imus Environmental Center for Pediatric Oncology at Hackensack University Medical Center and co-founder and co-director, with husband Don Imus, of The Imus Cattle Ranch for Kids with Cancer. “It doesn’t make common sense to inject Thimerosal, a known neurotoxin, into the bloodstream of our babies.”

This fall, two studies were published in leading medical journals admitting that limited data exists to support the effectiveness of flu shots. One study, in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, noted that, “there is scant data on the efficacy and effectiveness of influenza vaccine in young children.”

“So, not only is the flu shot’s effectiveness in doubt, there is plenty of evidence revealing the devastating effects of mercury,” said J.B. Handley, Lisa’s husband and a founder of PutChildrenFirst.org. “Our health authorities are not being forthcoming about mercury’s presence in shots and its toxicity to the nervous system. Our children deserve better.”

“With everything we know about the dangers of mercury and the havoc it can wreak on young, developing brains, there is no excuse for any vaccine to contain mercury,” said Lyn Redwood, RN, MSN, President of SafeMinds, a nonprofit committed to ending mercury-induced neurological disorders. “The survey reveals that Americans are overwhelmingly in the dark about what is in most flu shots. They do not want a known neurotoxin injected into their children, and they believe Congress and medical professionals must be more vigilant about keeping vaccines safe and mercury-free.”

Key findings from the poll, conducted October 27-30 by Zogby International, include:

- 76 percent of respondents are unaware that most flu shots contain mercury.
- After learning that mercury is an ingredient, 74 percent are less likely to get a flu shot and 86 percent of parents say they are less likely to get their child a flu shot.
- 77 percent of respondents believe mercury should not be an ingredient in flu shots given to pregnant women and children.
- 73 percent believe the government should warn pregnant women not to get a flu shot if it contains mercury.
- More than 70 percent agree that Congress, doctors and medical groups (e.g., the American Academy of Pediatrics) should take responsibility for ensuring that vaccines do not contain mercury.
- 80 percent of respondents and 84 percent of parents are willing to pay the \$2.50 additional cost for a mercury-free flu shot.

PutChildrenFirst.org

PutChildrenFirst.org is a parent-led initiative advocating vaccine safety and a division of [Generation Rescue](http://GenerationRescue.org), a nonprofit organization providing parents with information on the relationship between mercury and its relationship to Autism Spectrum Disorders. Generation Rescue gives parents information to make informed decisions about treatment options and physicians. Generation Rescue is a 501(c) (3) nonprofit founded in 2005.