In case you weren't aware, the number one source of calories in the United States is high-fructose corn syrup (HFCS). The average American consumes about 12 teaspoons of it every day, though as the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP) pointed out, teens and other "high consumers" may consume 80 percent more than that.

Now it turns out that this widespread sweetener is contaminated with the toxic heavy metal mercury!

The samples were found to contain levels of mercury ranging from below a detection limit of 0.005 to 0.570 micrograms mercury per gram of HFCS. And this was from samples of popular name-brand foods and beverages, including some made by Quaker, Hershey's, Kraft and Smucker's.

How Does Mercury Get Into Corn Syrup?

Although the makers of HFCS like to claim that it's natural, it's actually a highly refined product that would never exist in nature. Its manufacture involves an extensive process, one step of which is to separate corn starch from the corn kernel.

Caustic soda is used, among other things, to do this, and for decades mercury-grade caustic soda produced in industrial chlorine (chlor-alkali) plants has been used for this purpose.

Because mercury cells are used to produce some caustic soda, the caustic soda may become contaminated, and ultimately transfer that mercury contamination to the HFCS in your soda, salad dressing, soup, cereal, and so on.

Said IATP's David Wallinga, M.D., a co-author of both studies:

"Mercury is toxic in all its forms. Given how much high fructose corn syrup is consumed by children, it could be a significant additional source of mercury never before considered. We are calling for immediate changes by industry and the FDA to help stop this avoidable mercury contamination of the food supply."

Isn't it ironic that the Corn Refiners Association just recently spent around $30 million on an ad campaign designed to rehabilitate HFCS's reputation as an unhealthy sweetener?

It's going to take a lot more than a few TV commercials to explain away this latest revelation.

Why Consuming Mercury is a Bad Idea

Mercury acts as a poison to your brain and nervous system. This is especially dangerous for pregnant women and small children, whose brains are still developing. If infants or fetuses are exposed to mercury, it can cause:

- Mental retardation
- Cerebral palsy
- Deafness
- Blindness

Even in low doses mercury can interfere with a child's development, leading to shortened attention span and learning disabilities.

In adults, mercury poisoning can be a serious risk as well, and has been linked to fertility problems, memory and vision loss, and trouble with blood pressure regulation. It can also cause extreme fatigue and neuro-muscular dysfunction, as experienced recently by Chicago actor Jeremy Piven.

Further, studies show that mercury in your central nervous system (CNS) causes psychological, neurological, and immunological problems including:

- Arrhythmias and cardiomyopathies
- Tremors
- Insomnia
- Personality changes and irritability
- Headaches

- Weakness
- Blurred vision
- Slowed mental response
- Unsteady gait

To make matters worse, mercury bonds very firmly to structures in your CNS. Unless actively removed, it has an extremely long half-life of somewhere between 15 and 30 years in the CNS! What this means is that consuming mercury-contaminated HFCS is probably cumulative, with the damage adding up over time.

Mercury is Not the Only Reason to Avoid HFCS

The fact that HFCS-sweetened food and drinks may contain mercury is enough to make me avoid them like the plague. But then again, I avoided them entirely

even BEFORE this news came out and I strongly encourage you to take a similar stance.

Part of what makes HFCS such an unhealthy product is that it is metabolized to fat in your body far more rapidly than any other sugar, and, because most fructose is consumed in liquid form (soda), its negative metabolic effects are significantly magnified.

Among them are:

• Diabetes
• Obesity
• Metabolic Syndrome
• An increase in triglycerides and LDL (bad) cholesterol levels
• Liver disease

Fructose also contains no enzymes, vitamins or minerals, and it leeches micronutrients from your body. Unbound fructose, which is found in large quantities in HFCS, can interfere with your heart's use of minerals such as magnesium, copper and chromium.

Last but not least, HFCS is almost always made from genetically modified corn, which is fraught with its own well documented side effects and health concerns, such as increasing your risk of developing a food allergy to corn.

Want to Ditch HFCS?

If you're healthy, occasional use of small amounts of corn syrup isn't going to cause any health catastrophes. However, most people are not eating corn syrup in moderation. In 2007, Americans consumed an average of 56 pounds of HFCS each!

A large part of this was undoubtedly from soda, which, again, is the number one source of calories in the United States. So if you're looking to cut back on HFCS, right off the bat one of the best things to do is to limit or eliminate soda and sugary drinks from your diet, and my turbo tapping technique can help you to do that.

This dangerous sweetener is also in many processed foods and fruit juices, so to avoid it completely you need to focus your diet on whole foods. If you do purchase any processed foods, make sure you read the label … and put it back on the shelf if it lists high-fructose corn syrup as an ingredient -- especially if it's the first- or second-highest labeled ingredient.

Related Links:

- How High Fructose Corn Syrup Damages Your Body
- Guess Who Funds High Fructose Corn Syrup Studies?
- Debate About Dangers of High-Fructose Corn Syrup