

Hair Mineral Analysis Results

In a previous article I wrote about hair mineral analysis (HMA) and suggested that if you have a disease or illness, which has not responded to conventional treatment, you may wish to explore other possibilities and an HMA is an excellent place to start. So if you are suffering from 'unexplained' problems such as headaches, backaches, weakness or tremors, an HMA may help you to get to the bottom of it. Last time we looked at the effects of, and what to do about, raised levels of copper and aluminium as detected by an HMA. In this issue we will be looking at raised levels of lead and mercury.

Lead

Adults with high levels of lead may experience lack of physical and mental energy together with memory loss, depression and headaches. Children are at most risk from exposure. Aggression, learning difficulties, and hyperactivity are some of the most common effects – there may even be irreversible brain damage in the worst cases. Other symptoms associated with excess lead in children are: headaches, poor appetite, indigestion, constipation, fatigue, aching muscles, behavioural disorders, vomiting, diarrhoea and abdominal pains. Lead is obviously a toxin to be avoided in pregnancy – more on that later.

How to lower intake or absorption of lead into the body

The most important point is not to take in lead in the first place. One way in which a large proportion of lead is ingested is on the surface of produce grown or displayed by roads that suffer from heavy traffic. Before use, wash all fruit and vegetables in water with a little vinegar added – this will reduce surface deposits by about 90%. Likewise, discard the outer leaves where possible to reduce the amount taken in. To minimise exposure, use organically grown produce. Another danger is from animal protein if the animals have grazed in fields near roads with heavy traffic. Other sources are lead pipes, paint or batteries.

Ensure your diet contains adequate calcium (which prevents lead being stored in bones), copper, zinc (prevents absorption in the gut), iron, chromium. These hinder absorption, so reduce accumulation in the body. Vitamins C and a B-complex may need supplementing. A high fibre diet will prevent lead being absorbed – but this will also reduce uptake of zinc, so zinc supplementation may be necessary.

Minimise use of cans as some contain lead solder. Also beware of glazes on crockery. Check if there is lead in your water pipes and if so, ideally have them replaced. If this is impossible, run off water in the morning before using any for drinking or preparing food. Better still, use bottled water (filtering is unlikely to remove lead). Alcohol increases lead absorption, so cut drinking down (or if trying for a baby don't drink at all!) and don't store alcohol in lead crystal decanters.

Ways to remove lead from the body

Inorganic lead (found in lead pipes, paint and batteries) can be eliminated by consuming a diet rich in calcium, vitamins C and D, zinc and iron. Increased intake of pectin fibre and algin will decrease absorption. Algin is derived from alginic acid which is extracted from brown seaweed or kelp. It is used as a stabilizer and emulsifier, especially in ice cream or jellies. Penicillamine and EDTA chelation drugs may be used medically but have limited effect as they cannot cross the blood-brain barrier. However vitamin C can cross and has been shown to have better results in reducing concentrations of lead in the brain. Vitamin C sacrifices itself to take out heavy metals so extra supplements will be required to counteract a heavy toxic load. So far there is no known way to treat toxicity from organic lead (as found in petrol) because once it has been absorbed by the body, there is currently no way to eliminate it.

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Lead and pregnancy

Lead is fetotoxic and easily crosses the placenta. It increases the risk of foetal maldevelopment by interfering with nerve transmissions and control of the availability of oxygen to the nervous system. Most brain cells have already developed before a baby's birth. Then vast numbers of inter-connections must be made. If nerve cells have been damaged this can lead to hyperactivity or retardation as they grow. A direct relationship has been found between lead levels in the placenta and babies' birthweights. The correlation even holds true at what would be considered a 'normal' lead level, so there appears to be no real 'safe' level. Lead is also known to damage sperm and ova. Studies have found that stillbirths have elevated levels of lead and cadmium but reduced zinc. Lead is strongly antagonistic to the absorption and utilisation of the essential minerals zinc, iron and calcium, deficiencies of which can cause severe problems for the baby. Likewise, it has been found that deficiencies of calcium and zinc may increase the toxic effects and tissue accumulation of lead.

Mercury

One of the most toxic substances known to man is mercury. It inactivates many of the body's reactions and may cause symptoms such as memory loss, headaches, depression, poor co-ordination, insomnia, nervousness, dizziness, fatigue and in the worst cases, insanity. It accumulates as we age and this is exacerbated by the fact that we then may have less of the nutrients that protect against it.

Some cases of allergies may occur because the immune system is so stressed by the levels of mercury in the body that it cannot cope with normal functions.

Common sources of mercury in our lives

The most common source of mercury for most of us is in amalgam dental fillings. In severe cases you may wish to consider having these extracted. Many sufferers from auto-immune diseases such as MS have improved after having amalgam fillings correctly removed. However, one school of thought considers this unwise because you expose yourself to higher levels during the process. If you do decide to pursue this route, be sure to use a specially trained dentist who will take all the necessary precautions. Dentists are at particular risk of mercury toxicity.

Another source is contaminated fish. Fish can concentrate mercury discharged in industrial waste. It may pass from plankton, to fish and thence to man. Tuna have often been cited as an example of fish that accumulate mercury by eating smaller fish. Luckily tuna are high in selenium which protects against mercury, but nevertheless it makes sense to keep tuna consumption within reasonable limits.

Other sources are broken thermometers, fungicides and industrial processes.

How can you reduce the uptake of mercury from the diet?

Calcium and zinc reduce the uptake of mercury from the diet so eat plenty of leafy green vegetables, nuts, seeds, Brewer's Yeast and seafoods. Avoid as many as possible of the sources above. Make sure you eat organically grown foods to minimise the risk of ingesting toxins from pesticides.

The vitamins and minerals in wholesome food can help protect you from toxins and aid detoxification if necessary – for instance, vitamin C (found in fruit and vegetables and easy to take as an inexpensive supplement) fights against heavy metals. Selenium, particularly, protects against mercury and can be found in seeds (particularly sesame), seafoods and seaweeds.

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Can you remove mercury from your body?

Fibre and pectin (a soluble form of fibre found in carrots, apples, the pith of citrus fruits and bananas) help remove toxic metals from the body, as do foods which include sulphur containing amino acids (the building blocks for protein). These include onions, garlic and eggs. Finally, be sure to eat plenty of fruit and vegetables containing vitamin C.

If you have recognised any of the above symptoms, a relatively inexpensive way to check out your toxicity status is to have a hair mineral analysis. Your results will be returned in about three weeks together with a comprehensive analysis (usually about 10-12 pages) explaining how you can correct your mineral balance.

Learn more about HMA, view a sample report, and see how to order online, at <http://www.4-hair-mineral-analysis.com>