Where Does Mercury Come From?

**Natural Sources:**
- Soils and rocks
- Wildfires

**Man-Made Sources:**
- Burning coal and medical waste
- Manufacturing chemicals
What Happens to Mercury?

1. Rain and snow wash mercury out of the environment and into oceans, lakes, and rivers
2. In water, mercury becomes its toxic form, methyl mercury
3. Fish species eat methyl mercury when they eat other fish
Up the Food Chain

Mercury

Coal plant

Methylmercury

FOOD CHAIN

NADP
Top of the Aquatic Food Chain

Large, long-living predator fish

- Shark
- King mackerel
- Walleye
- Swordfish
- Northern pike
- Largemouth bass
- Lake trout
Human Health Effects of Mercury

Damage to:
• Heart
• Kidneys
• Central Nervous System
Research

• Nearly all fish contain some amount of methyl mercury.

• Young children should follow government rules on eating fish.
MDN samples mercury in rain and snow to help researchers determine trends on mercury deposition: where it is deposited, at which rate, and at what concentration.

Total annual average mercury concentration in rainfall (top), and total annual mercury wet deposition (bottom) in 2008.
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