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Trade Your Old Mercury Thermometer for a New Digital Thermometer

According to Licking County Health Commissioner, Joe Ebel, many families have mercury fever thermometers in their medicine cabinets. But if a mercury thermometer breaks, the spilled mercury is toxic and can pose a serious health threat to you and your family.

The Licking County Health Department invites the public to participate in a Mercury Thermometer Exchange. Anyone who brings mercury thermometers to Licking County Health Department will receive one free digital thermometer. One per household, please.

For decades the mercury-based fever thermometer has been used as a first step in caring for someone who feels sick. Ironically, this straw-size tube of glass with silvery-white liquid inside can actually be a health risk for families and communities.

Fever thermometers are a common source of mercury in local waste streams, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). In fact, the EPA estimates that fever thermometers containing approximately 17 tons of mercury are discarded annually in local landfills across the United States, making fever thermometers the single largest source of mercury in municipal solid waste.

Exposure to mercury may cause a variety of health effects in people, and children and developing fetuses are particularly sensitive to its hazards. Depending on the level of exposure, mercury can cause damage to the nervous system, the brain, the kidneys, the liver and the immune system.

Mercury thermometers can be placed in a zip lock bag, and brought to the Licking County Health Department at 675 Price Rd., Newark, from 8am-5pm weekdays to exchange it for a new digital thermometer.

For more information, contact the Licking County Health Department at 740-349-6535, e-mail jdye@lickingcohealth.org or visit www.lickingcohealth.org.

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