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HEALTH DEPARTMENT LAUNCHES MERCURY STUDY FOLLOW-UP



Martin County women, 18-49, invited to participate

Contact:

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Martin County, FL – The Florida Department of Health in Martin County is launching a follow-up study to determine mercury levels in women, linked to the consumption of fish.

In 2010, Martin was one of four counties in the state to participate in the mercury project funded by a grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Results showed that of the women surveyed, 25% had elevated levels of mercury. Reports from Duval County showed that 7% of women had higher than normal levels, while 16% of women tested in Escambia and Santa Rosa had higher than normal levels.

Mercury is a metal that occurs in the environment both naturally and as a result of industrial pollution. One form of mercury, called methyl mercury, is found in fish. Most elevated mercury levels in humans is a result of eating fish with high levels of mercury including shark, tuna, marlin, king mackerel, Chilean sea bass and swordfish. The risk is highest for women of childbearing age because mercury can damage the nervous systems of developing fetuses and young children.

For women who are pregnant or planning to become pregnant, it is important to reduce the consumption of fish that are high in mercury. When fish consumption is reduced, mercury levels typically will be reduced to a safe range.

Over the next few months, Florida Department of Health staff will be participating in a series of community events to collect hair samples for mercury testing and provide information on the public health study. Volunteer participants must be women, between the ages of 18 and 49 who have lived in Martin County for at least 1 year. Women who participated in the 2010 survey, who still meet the requirements for testing, are welcome to participate again.

Free Mercury Testing Events - By Appointment:

Florida Department of Health, Martin County • 3441 SE Willoughby Blvd, Stuart

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>
December 15 & 16	5:30 pm -7:30 pm
December 17 & 18	10:00 am – 2:00 pm

*Appointments are required. To schedule, contact Kerry Matthews at (772) 260-4328

About the Florida Department of Health

The department works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

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