



Reduce the Risk of Mercury-Containing Sphygmomanometers

Many sphygmomanometers contain mercury—the silvery liquid that rises in the glass column when the instrument is in use. Mercury is a potent neurotoxin and impacts the central nervous system. It can also damage the kidneys and liver. Risks associated with mercury-containing sphygmomanometers may exceed their benefits. For example, the cost to properly clean up a mercury spill in a clinic can be more than \$10,000.

Mercury-free aneroid and electronic sphygmomanometers are now commonly available and are recommended over mercury-containing devices to reduce the risk of patient/worker exposure and environmental contamination.

Ban on sale of mercury sphygmomanometers

As of January 1, 2006, the Mercury Education and Reduction Act makes it illegal for suppliers to sell mercury-containing sphygmomanometers in Washington State. Among other goals, the law seeks to prevent mercury spills and the improper disposal of mercury-containing instruments. While clinics that have mercury sphygmomanometers may continue to use them, the Local Hazardous Waste Management Program recommends replacing them with instruments that don't contain mercury.

Ban on disposal of mercury-containing products in the landfill

As of October 1, 2005, it is illegal to dispose of mercury-containing products in landfills operated by both the City of Seattle and King County. Mercury-containing products, including sphygmomanometers, thermometers, fluorescent lamps, thermostats and other switches must be returned to the manufacturer, recycled or disposed of as hazardous waste.

What do these laws mean for *your* clinic?

- You may continue to use sphygmomanometers that contain mercury if you already have them in your clinic. We recommend you take precautions to prevent breakage and potentially expensive mercury spills. See “How can I make my mercury sphygmomanometers safer?” below.
- If you purchase new sphygmomanometers, they must be mercury-free. An exemption may be granted for clinics affiliated with hospitals that have adopted an approved mercury reduction plan.

THE LOCAL HAZARDOUS WASTE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM IN KING COUNTY



www.govlink.org/hazwaste

How do I dispose of mercury-containing sphygmomanometers?

There are three ways to properly dispose of mercury-containing sphygmomanometers:

1. Return to the manufacturer.

The following manufacturers will accept mercury sphygmomanometers for recycling (some will take old sphygmomanometers only in exchange for replacement purchases):

American Diagnostic Corporation 631-273-9600 www.adctoday.com

Trimline Medical Products 1-800-526-3538 (toll free) www.trimlinemed.com

W.A. Baum Co. 1-888-281-6061 (toll free) www.wabaum.com

Welch Allyn Medical Products 315-685-4100 www.welchallyn.com

2. Recycle through a mercury recycling company.

The following companies remove mercury components from products and retort or recycle the mercury. Contact them for details on costs and shipping instructions.

AERC Recycling Solutions, California 1-800-628-3675 (toll free) www.aercmti.com

Bethlehem Apparatus Co., Pennsylvania 610-838-7034 www.bethlehemapparatus.com

Mercury Waste Solutions, Wisconsin 1-800-741-3343 (toll free) www.mwsi.com

3. Dispose through a hazardous waste management company.

Many firms provide pick up and disposal services for hazardous wastes, including mercury. These firms are listed in King County's Hazardous Waste Directory www.govlink.org/hazwaste/business/wastedirectory under 'Hazardous Waste Disposal.' You may also call 206-263-3050 or 206-296-3976 for a free printed copy of the *Hazardous Waste Directory*.

Where can I purchase mercury-free sphygmomanometers?

The following companies offer mercury-free electronic or aneroid sphygmomanometers. You may also contact your medical equipment supplier for more information.

American Diagnostic Corporation 631-273-9600 www.adctoday.com

Omron Healthcare, Inc. 1-800-216-1333 (toll free) www.omronhealthcare.com

Trimline Medical Products 1-800-526-3538 (toll free) www.trimlinemed.com

VSM MedTech Ltd. 913-307-9527 www.vsmmedtech.com

W.A. Baum Co. 1-888-281-6061 (toll free) www.wabaum.com

Welch Allyn Medical Products 315-685-4100 www.welchallyn.com

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Where can I get more information about mercury-free sphygmomanometers?

The following articles compare mercury and aneroid sphygmomanometers:

Sustainable Hospitals: Comparing Mercury and Aneroid Sphygmomanometers

http://www.sustainablehospitals.org/HTMLSrc/IP_Merc_Tools_CompSphyg.html

Health Care Without Harm: Measuring Blood Pressure Accurately - The Complete Story

<http://www.noharm.org/us/mercury/sphygmo>

How can I make my mercury sphygmomanometers safer?

If your clinic is using W.A. Baum's #33 Wall Mounted Unit and you cannot replace them, you may want to take the following steps to help prevent breakage and expensive mercury spills.

Lever lock: Install an L-shaped lever lock at the top of the glass mercury cartridge tube to prevent tampering with the cartridge tube release lever and accidental release of mercury. These lever locks can be used on W.A. Baum's Wall Unit #33. They can be obtained for free by calling W.A. Baum at 1-888-281-6061 (toll free) or by emailing a request to info@wabaum.com or by contacting the Local Hazardous Waste Management Program in King County at 206-296-3976.

Mylar-coated glass tubes: W.A. Baum Co. will replace the glass tubes in W.A. Baum's Wall Unit #33 with unbreakable mylar-coated tubes free of charge. Contact W.A. Baum at 1-888-281-6061 (toll free) or info@wabaum.com for additional information.

What if I have a mercury spill?

The Department of Ecology's publication titled **Mercury Awareness** (#01-04-022) found at <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/pubs/0104022.pdf> provides detailed information on spill clean-up requirements and procedures.

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Page 3 of 3

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