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Clear Waters, Healthy Futures: Tackling Mercury Pollution in Aquatic Ecosystems

[1]Peesapati Akhil, [1]Velugolu Venkata Suneel Kumar, [1]Velpula Madan Mohan Reddy, [1]Roja Angadi and [1]Matta Sai Chandu
[1]Department of Soil Science, School of Agriculture, Lovely Professional University Phagwara, Punjab, India 144411

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Introduction:

Mercury which is denoted by 'Hg' is historically known as quick silver. It is one and only metal that is seen in liquid state at room temperature. The earth's crust contains mercury naturally, but human activities like mining the earth and the burning of fossil fuels have resulted in significant global mercury contamination. Mercury that is released into the air eventually sinks into the ground and washed into the water. Global environment and human health are greatly impacted by mercury contamination by causing to severe problems for the humans. A metal that is very dangerous to living things is mercury. It comes in a variety of shapes and sizes, some of which emerge spontaneously from the surroundings. Fluorescent light bulbs, barometers, and thermometers all use metallic or elemental mercury, a tasteless, glossy, silver-white liquid. Extreme hazard exists with metallic mercury.

Mercury is a naturally occurring element which found in soil, water, and air. When mercury exposure even in very little doses, can have major health effects to humans and to the unborn children. Potential toxicity to the people and ecosystems is related with mercury contamination in the soil, water, and air. Natural processes may bury, dilute, or dissolve mercury deposits in severely polluted locations where mercury has accumulated due to industrial or mining activity, leading to concentration decreases. However, mercury contents have grown in many relatively virgin locations because of an increase in atmospheric deposition.

Toxic effect of mercury:

The chemical makeup of mercury and the method of exposure determine its hazardous consequences. The most poisonous form of mercury [CH3Hg] is methylmercury. It disrupts the neurological system, which controls coordination and the perceptions of touch, taste, and sight, as well as the immune system and genetic and enzyme systems. Because they are five to

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ten times more sensitive than adults, developing embryos are particularly vulnerable to the harm caused by methylmercury. The precise processes by which mercury enters the food chain are still poorly understood and can differ amongst ecosystems. A few microorganisms are crucial in the early stages. Inorganic mercury is ingested by bacteria that break down sulfate (SO4=) in the environment, where it undergoes metabolic transformation into methylmercury.

Demerits of mercury:

Mercury, a highly toxic element, poses a significant risk to human health with a range of detrimental effects, particularly on blood. What makes mercury particularly menacing is that it doesn't require direct ingestion to poison the body. Instead, mercury poisoning most commonly occurs through inhalation of its vapours, though it can also be absorbed through the skin. Notably, the absorption of mercury through the skin is a slow process, whereas exposure to mercury vapor represents a far more immediate and hazardous threat than direct contact with elemental mercury on bare skin.

Keeping Food Security Safe:

Fish is an essential source of sustenance and nutrition for many people all over the world. A sustainable fish population that offers a consistent source of protein and revenue depends on addressing mercury contamination in water sources. Communities who rely on fishing for their food can continue to have a reliable supply of food if mercury deposition in fish is prevented.

The Minamata Convention on Mercury and other international agreements serve as a reminder of the commitment of all nations to combat mercury contamination. Countries uphold their obligations to safeguard the environment and public health by actively reducing mercury emissions and releases. Fulfilling these obligations improves a country's reputation and shows its commitment to environmental care on a global scale. The effects of mercury contamination on aquatic environments are extensive. By building up in aquatic animals, it affects their ability to reproduce and general health, upsetting the delicate balance of these ecosystems. Because aquatic habitats are so important to maintaining a healthy planet, addressing mercury poisoning assures the preservation of biodiversity. Potential toxicity to people and ecosystems is related with mercury contamination in the soil, water, and air. Increased mercury (Hg) concentrations have been found in many environmental media because of industrial operations including coal combustion. With a focus on cutting-edge materials and creative technologies, this review critically assesses current advancements in technological techniques for the cleanup of Hg-

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contaminated soil, water, and air. There is a lot of study being done on different nanomaterials, like magnetic nanocomposites, carbon nanotubes, and nanosheets.

How To decrease the mercury level in water:

Mercury levels in water can be decreased by a variety of water filters and purifiers. But some are more successful than others. Reverse osmosis units, activated carbon filters, and water distillers are some of the top water filters for removing mercury. To remove impurities from water, reverse osmosis (RO) systems employ a minimum of three stages of filtration. These stages consist of a reverse osmosis membrane, a carbon filter, and a sediment filter. A significant portion of the mercury in water is removed by a RO system's activated carbon stage, and the remaining mercury is removed by the RO membrane's minuscule pores. About 95% to 97% of the mercury in water is removed by RO filtration, effectively eliminating the possibility of ingesting or absorbing mercury toxicity.

Advantages of reverse osmosis for removing mercury:

Whole-home configurations are available. Almost all other pollutants are removed together with the mercury. The most likely source of water to have a high mercury content is a well, which is ideal can be altered to meet your specific water needs

Disadvantages of reverse osmosis for removing mercury:

Installation is more difficult than with carbon filters and water distillers. Usually costing more than carbon filters effluent is created during the filtration process. Need a storage tank that is the right size so that it can produce and gather enough water for your family's needs.

You might need to stop using your home's water altogether until a filter is installed if mercury levels are too high. Mercury enters the skin very gradually. However, prolonged exposure, even skin contact, can cause mercury poisoning if the mercury content of your water is high enough. You can bathe in water that contains more mercury than 2 ppb, but you should not expose yourself to high levels for an extended length of time.

Conclusion:

The benefits of managing mercury contamination are numerous and intricately linked, ranging from preserving ecosystems and human health to encouraging innovation and global collaboration. We set the stage for a healthier, more sustainable future for future generations by recognizing the importance of this issue and acting jointly. We can lessen the effects of mercury poisoning and pave the way for a cleaner, safer environment by working together.

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