

## Mercury and Birth Defects

Over the last decade scores of scientific studies have been carried out to determine if mercury is a deadly weapon.

Until now dentists have assumed that the resin living in the base of the cavity would protect the metals of the amalgams from spreading down into the pulp and on into the tissues. But now studies show that this is not the case. Resin only delays the entry of the mercury into the tissues. There is ample evidence to show that mercury from amalgam is present in the soft tissues of the mouth. From there it can move via the circulation system into the rest of the body.

Studies showed a marked correlation between the mercury levels in the mother's blood and the case of

still births. It also indicated that malformed infants could be linked to prenatal background mercury levels. Although it has been shown that all mercury compounds are potentially harmful to the fetus, pregnant mothers are not alerted to the possible damage. Mercury also has the ability to penetrate the blood/brain barrier which protects the brain from chemical damage. The only country to take necessary poisoning seriously is Japan: thousands of people there suffered irreversible damage to the nervous system and brain from eating contaminated fish.

Many doctors insist that mercury should be avoided in any form. In the past people did not have much choice. They either had amalgam or rotting teeth.

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## The Fifth International

### Women and Health Meeting

Women's health activists, researchers, and practitioners from all over the world will gather in San Jose, Costa Rica next spring for the Fifth International Women and Health Meeting. The Centro Feminista de Informacion Accion (CEFEMINA) is coordinating the planning for the conference, which is scheduled to take place from May 23 - 28, 1987. This marks the first time the meeting will be held in a Third World Country; the

previous four meetings have been held in European cities.

The conference will focus on five main themes: population policies and reproductive rights, community health, environmental health hazards, drugs, and the health care system.

Eleven national and international women's organizations, are sponsoring the conference.