

The dynamics of mercury toxins in the oceans' food web

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Credit: Tiago Fioreze / Wikipedia

Methylmercury, a toxic form of mercury that is readily absorbed from the gastro-intestinal tract and can cause in a variety of health issues, poses a significant threat to marine animals at the top of the food web.

A new study confirms that Arctic species of these animals have higher concentrations of methylmercury in their tissues compared with animals

lower in the [food web](#); however, it also shows similar trends in selenium, which could help play a protective role against the [toxic effects](#) of mercury.

"Methylmercury concentrations increased through the food web at greater rates than observed in several earlier studies, especially at lower latitudes," said lead author Dr. Anders Ruus, author of the *Environmental Toxicology & Chemistry* study.

"This corroborates earlier suggestions that biomagnification may be higher in Arctic systems and adds to our knowledge of methylmercury dynamics in the Arctic."

More information: "Methylmercury biomagnification in an Arctic pelagic food web." *Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry*.
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