

# Second Draft Statement on the Effects of Mercury on Maternal Health

**This is a paper for discussion. This does not represent the views of the Committee and should not be cited.**

## Introduction

1. As part of the current programme of work on the maternal diet initiated by the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN), the COT agreed to prioritise papers on iodine, vitamin D, dietary supplements, and heavy metals including lead, mercury, cadmium, and arsenic, each to be considered in separate papers.
2. In May 2025, the first draft statement on the on the effects of mercury on maternal health was presented to the Committee ([TOX/2025/22](#)). Overall, the Committee was content with the risk characterisation and conclusions of the statement but had some comments on the structure and content of the ADME, toxicity and derivation of health-based guidance value (HBGV) sections.
3. To address these comments in the second draft statement additional primary literature has been provided (paragraphs 16, 22, 27-28, 33-42, 45-46 and 48-50) and the structure has been altered to maintain separate discussions on inorganic mercury and methylmercury and their effects on adults, children or animals to improve flow and clarity of the document. It has also been made clearer which texts in the derivation of HBGV section are opinions of other authorities and what primary evidence their opinions are based upon.
4. Additional changes have been made in the exposure assessment section to clarify pica behaviour as an uncertainty of the risk assessment (paragraphs 94 and 108) and to address the National Diet and Nutrition Survey (NDNS) underestimating energy intake (paragraphs 99-101).

5. The second draft statement (Annex A) includes a summary of ADME and toxicity of mercury, the derivation of HBGVs for MeHg and inorganic mercury, an exposure assessment from all major sources including food, drinking water, soil and air, the risk characterisation and conclusions.

## **Questions for the Committee**

6. The Committee are asked to consider the following questions:

- a) Are Members now content with the layout and structure of the second draft statement following the changes made?
- b) Does the Committee have any further comments on the content of the statement?

**Secretariat**

**September 2025**