



# Chemistry

H+K: Good morning principal, vice principals, teachers and fellow schoolmates!

H: I am Holly from class 5D.

K: I am Kitty from class 5D too. We are both studying Chemistry this year.

H: Kitty, have you read a book or watched a movie called 'Alice in Wonderland' before? There is a villain called 'Mad Hatter' in the story. He acts crazily. Do you know how Lewis Carroll came out with this character?

K: I know that in the early 19th century, a lot of hat-makers had some horrible symptoms.

H: Yes right! The horrible symptoms included trembling, loss of coordination, slurred speech, loosening of teeth, memory loss, depression, hallucinations, irritability and anxiety.

K: I see. No wonder why there was a phrase called 'mad as a hatter' to describe a person who is mentally ill.

H: These symptoms were concluded by doctors later. Doctors said that people who got these symptoms actually suffered from 'mercury poisoning' or 'Mad Hatter Syndrome'.

K: I learn from my Chemistry lesson that mercury solution was once commonly used during the process of turning fur into felt, causing the hatters to breathe in the fumes of this highly toxic metal, a situation worsened by the poor ventilation of most of the workshops.

H: Yes true! Mercury is the liquid metal in room temperature. It is widely used in batteries, lamps or light bulbs. However, it is toxic because mercury vapour can enter our body through skin, mouth or nose easily, and can cause damage to our brain and nervous system. Moreover, it can be accumulated in our body and may cause death.



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- K: Nowadays, the working environment for factories has been improved and mercury-related products are gradually replaced with other less toxic products.
- H: That sounds much better to human and animals' health. So we must be careful and avoid being in contact with mercury because mercury poisoning can be fatal if a person does not receive medical care immediately.
- H+K: That's the end of our sharing. Thank you very much!