

2.WHAT KIND OF SUBSTANCE IS ORGANIC MERCURY?



The Great Buddha in Nara

Humans have had a long history with mercury, and it is well known, for instance, that mercury was used in the gold plating of the Great Buddha in Nara and in the Edo period in medicine and facial powder. In Japan, the places named Niu indicate the areas where mercury was produced and used.

Mercury is classified into inorganic mercury and organic mercury. Metallic mercury, which is recognized as inorganic mercury, is used in the production of familiar items such as fluorescent lights, batteries, and thermometers.

Methyl mercury which caused Minamata disease is a type of organic mercury. It is a white powdery substance and its smell is like sulfur in a hot spring. It is easily absorbed by gastric and intestinal organs, and carried by the blood into the brain as well as the liver, the kidney, and even into the fetus. Methyl mercury is highly poisonous and causes great damage.