

## HISTORIES OF GUIDELINE DEVELOPMENT FOR THE FOURTH EDITION

### 12. Chemical fact sheets

#### 12.1 Chemical contaminants in drinking-water

##### Mercury

##### ***History of guideline development***

The 1958 and 1963 WHO *International Standards for Drinking-water* did not mention mercury. Mercury was first mentioned in the 1971 International Standards, which gave the tentative upper concentration limit for mercury as 0.001 mg/l (total mercury), based on health concerns. It was noted that this figure was related to levels found in natural water. In the first edition of the *Guidelines for Drinking-water Quality*, published in 1984, the guideline value of 0.001 mg/l was retained for total mercury. The 1993 Guidelines also retained the guideline value of 0.001 mg/l for total mercury, based on the PTWI for methylmercury established by JECFA in 1972 and reaffirmed by JECFA in 1988. This value was brought forward to the third edition, published in 2004. In the first addendum to the third edition, published in 2006, a guideline value of 0.006 mg/l was established for inorganic mercury. This guideline value was brought forward to the fourth edition of the Guidelines, published in 2011.