Eat Fish, Choose Wisely

Protect Against Mercury

A Guide for
Pregnant and Breastfeeding Women and Young Children

Many people eat fish and shellfish as part of a healthy diet.

Fish is high in protein, low in calories, and rich in nutrients. But fish may also contain mercury. Most people can eat fish without being concerned about mercury, but pregnant and breastfeeding women, and young children should choose fish wisely.

Mercury Can Harm Babies and Young Children

During pregnancy, mercury can pass from a mother to her baby. In smaller amounts, it can also pass into breast milk. Mercury can cause learning problems in children by harming the developing brain.

Most babies whose mothers eat fish in pregnancy are born healthy and develop well. Still, the less a child is exposed to mercury, the better.

To protect their babies, women who are pregnant or planning pregnancy and breastfeeding mothers should eat fish that are lower in mercury and limit the amount of fish they eat.

To protect their children, parents should choose fish that are lower in mercury and limit the amount they serve to children younger than 6 years.

Some Fish Have Too Much Mercury

Most fish contain some mercury, and some contain a *lot*. Larger fish and fish that eat other fish tend to have more mercury.

When people eat fish, the amount of mercury they take in depends on:

- ***What kind*** of fish they eat,
- ***How often*** they eat it, and
- ***How much*** fish they eat at each meal.

Know Your Serving Size

A typical adult serving size is 4 to 6 ounces. A child's serving should be smaller. If you eat larger portions, eat fish less often than recommended in the chart.

- To estimate serving sizes, read food labels or ask about weight.

- A 4-ounce fish steak or fillet is about the size and thickness of a deck of cards.

- Restaurant servings are often much larger than the recommended serving size.

- A typical pair of nigiri sushi, sashimi or a single sushi roll contains about 2 ounces of fish.

- To avoid harmful bacteria, pregnant women should not eat raw fish.

Weekly Servings of Fish and Shellfish Recommended for Pregnant and Breastfeeding Women, and Young Children

Based on an adult serving size of 6 ounces.
A child's serving should be smaller.

VERY LOW IN MERCURY — Eat Up to 5 Servings a Week

- Anchovies
- Clams
- Crawfish/Crayfish
- Hake
- Herring
- Oysters
- Pollock
- Salmon*
- Sardines
- Shrimp
- Tilapia
- Whiting

* Some farmed salmon contain high levels of other contaminants

LOW IN MERCURY — Eat Up to 2 Servings a Week

- Butterfish
- Catfish
- Cod
- Crab
- Croaker (Atlantic)
- Flounder
- Haddock
- Jacksmelt
- Mackerel (North Atlantic)
- Mullet
- Mussels
- Perch (Ocean or White)
- Scallops
- Shad (American)
- Sole
- Squid/Calamari
- Trout (Freshwater)
- Tuna (Canned Light)
- Whitefish

HIGH IN MERCURY — Eat No More Than One Serving a Week

- Bass (Black, Saltwater, Striped)
- Bluefish
- Eel
- Halibut
- Lobster
- Monkfish
- Sablefish
- Scorpionfish
- Sheepshead
- Skate
- Snapper
- Tuna (Albacore or Canned White)*
- Weakfish/Sea Trout

* Limit to 4 ounces

TOO HIGH IN MERCURY — Don't Eat These Fish!

- Chilean Sea Bass
- Grouper
- Mackerel (King or Spanish)
- Marlin
- Orange Roughy
- Shark
- Swordfish
- Tilefish
- Tuna (Fresh, Steaks, Sushi)

Don't eat fish or shellfish caught in local New York City waters – they may contain other contaminants.

5 Ways to Limit Mercury

1
Choose fish that are **lower in *mercury***.

2
Don't eat fish that have the most mercury.

3
Eat **fewer – or smaller – servings** of fish.

4
Choose **smaller fish.**

5
Eat a **variety** of fish.

More Information

Environmental Protection Agency:
www.epa.gov/ost/fish

Food and Drug Administration:
www.fda.gov or call the FDA's Food
Information Hotline toll-free at:
1-888-SAFEFOOD (1-888-723-3366)

New York State Fish Advisories:
www.health.ny.gov/environmental/
outdoors/fish/health_advisories/

Call 311 or visit **nyc.gov/health**
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