

Mercury in Fish

Protect yourself and your family from mercury, information for:

- Women 18 – 45, especially those who are pregnant or breastfeeding
- Children 1 – 17

Fish is healthy for you and your family, and most fish are very safe to eat. But some fish may contain a chemical called mercury. Too much mercury is harmful. If you are pregnant or breastfeeding and have mercury in your body, it can get into your baby's body, too.

1. Why eat fish?

Adults and children should eat fish because fish are nutritious and help us stay healthy. Fish have healthy fats, called omega-3s, that help babies' brains develop. Omega-3s are also good for your heart and can help lower heart disease in adults. It's best to eat fish that are low in mercury and high in omega-3s.

2. Can I eat the fish from stores or restaurants?

Yes. Most fish that you buy in stores or restaurants are very safe to eat. But women and children should avoid fish with high levels of mercury, even if they come from a store or restaurant. The guide on the next page shows what kind of fish and how much fish is safe to eat.

3. What about fish that I catch, or that family or friends catch?

Fish from many places in California have mercury or other chemicals in them. Always follow the local health advisory for the areas where your fish were caught. These advisories tell you the kinds of fish that are safe to eat, and how much to eat. If there is no local health advisory, follow the guide on the next page.

4. Planning to get pregnant?

If you are planning to get pregnant, including fish in your diet is good for you and your baby. Following the guide on the next page will protect your baby from mercury. Women under 46 years old should follow the guide, even if they are not planning to get pregnant.



Key Messages

What is mercury?

Mercury is a type of metal. It is used in thermometers, batteries, lamps, and other products. Mercury gets into the air, soil, and water from some industries, like power plants.

How can mercury harm my baby?

Mercury is most harmful to babies because it harms their growing brains. Babies with mercury in their body may grow and learn more slowly than other babies. If a pregnant mom has a lot of mercury in her body, the mercury can get into her baby's body. After the baby is born, a mother can pass mercury from her body to her baby when breastfeeding.

5. What kind of fish or seafood can I eat from stores or restaurants? What kind should I avoid?

Safe to Eat 2 Servings a Week

Shrimp	Clams
Salmon	Scallops
Canned light tuna	Sardinas
Crab	Herring
Pollock	Trout
Catfish	Snapper
Tilapia	Sole
Black sea bass	Flounder
Oysters	Cod
Haddock	Squid (calamari)
Anchovies	Crawfish

Caution! Eat 1 Serving A Week or Less

Albacore or yellowfin tuna
Lobster
Mahi mahi
Halibut
Sea bass (including Chilean)
Croaker
Red snapper/rockfish
Sablefish/black cod

Do not Eat

King mackerel
Marlin
Shark
Orange roughy
Swordfish
Tilefish
Bluefin or bigeye tuna

6. What about fish caught by myself, family, or friends?

Check for health advisories in areas where fish are caught. If there are no advisories, eat up to 1 serving per week of fish caught by you, family or friends.

7. How much is one serving of fish?

One serving of fish for an adult is:

- About the size and thickness of your hand, or
- About 6 ounces of cooked fish (or 8 ounces uncooked fish)

Fish Serving Size for:

Adults



Children



8. Reduce your mercury risk from the fish you eat:

- Eat a variety of different kinds of fish and shellfish.
- If you eat more than the recommended amount of fish in a week, eat less the next week.
- Cleaning and cooking fish will not get rid of the mercury. It's better to eat fish that have less mercury in them.
- Pregnant women and young children should never eat raw or partly cooked fish.
- Do not eat the guts of the fish.
- For fish caught by you, family or friends, eat smaller fish rather than bigger fish. They usually have less mercury.



For information about local health advisories, contact:

California Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment
www.oehha.ca.gov/fish.html

Los Angeles County Department of Public Health
www.publichealth.lacounty.gov