

Mercury in Fish

Protect Yourself and Your Children



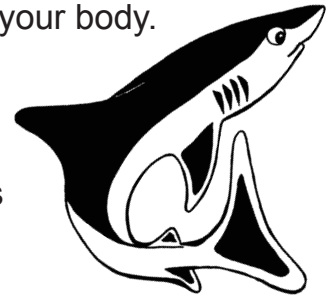
Information for:

- *Pregnant Women*
- *Breastfeeding Women*
- *Children under 6*

Fish are nutritious and good for you to eat. Most fish are safe to eat. But some fish may contain a chemical called mercury which can be dangerous to the body. If you eat the wrong kinds of fish, or too much fish, you can get too much mercury in your body. If you are pregnant or breastfeeding, mercury can harm your baby, too.

What is mercury?

Mercury is a type of metal found in soil, rock, air, and water. It is used in thermometers, batteries, lamps, and other products. Some industries release mercury into the air, soil, and water.



How can mercury harm my baby?

Mercury can harm your baby when you are pregnant or breastfeeding. Babies born to mothers who have a lot of mercury in their bodies may develop more slowly and have problems learning.

SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EATING FISH

- **For pregnant women and women who might become pregnant:**
 - **Do not eat shark, swordfish, tilefish, or king mackerel.**
 - **It is safe to eat other types of fish purchased in stores or restaurants as long as you don't eat on average more than 1 pound per week (uncooked weight) or 2 cans of tuna (6 ounce size) per week.**
- **For nursing mothers and young children (those less than 6 years old), do not eat shark, swordfish, tilefish, or king mackerel.**
- **For safety recommendations on eating fish caught by family or friends in fresh water (lakes, reservoirs, rivers, or streams) or in the ocean, contact the county health department or other agencies listed on this flyer.**

Can I eat the fish from stores or restaurants?

Most fish that you buy in stores or restaurants are very safe. But even these fish may contain mercury. For all fish and shellfish you buy, follow the safety guidelines shown in the box on the front of this flyer.

What about fish that family or friends catch?

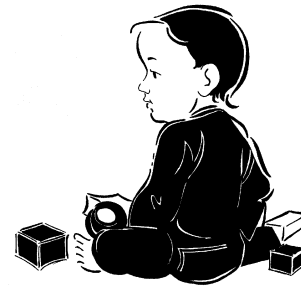
Fish from some areas of California can have mercury or other chemicals in them. These areas have warnings called "health advisories." Health advisories tell you the kinds and amounts of fish that are safe to eat. Always follow the health advisory for the areas where your fish were caught. Health advisory resources are in the shaded box to the right. If there is no advisory, follow the safety guidelines shown in the box on the front of this flyer.

What about children?

Mercury can harm children, too. Follow the health advisories for the areas where your fish were caught. If there are no health advisories, follow the safety guidelines shown in the box on the front of this flyer.

More tips for making fish safer to eat:

- Eat different kinds of fish.
- Eat cooked salmon, catfish, shrimp, and scallops which have little or no mercury.
- Pregnant women should avoid raw fish, like sushi, or raw shellfish, like oysters or shrimp.
- Cook fish until it flakes with a fork.
- If you eat canned tuna, eat chunk or chunk light tuna which has less mercury than solid white or chunk white tuna.
- Never eat the organs or guts of fish or shellfish.
- Eat smaller fish rather than older, larger fish because they generally have less mercury.
- Planning to become pregnant? It is best to begin following these guidelines 1 year before becoming pregnant.



For information about local health advisories, contact:

- **Los Angeles County Department of Health Services
Toxics Epidemiology Program**
(213) 240-7785
<http://lapublichealth.org/tox/index.htm>
- **California Environmental Protection Agency
Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment
Pesticide and Environmental Toxicology Section**
(916) 327-7319 or (510) 622-3170
www.oehha.ca.gov/fish.html
- **The California Department of Fish and Game**
(562) 342-7199
<http://www.dfg.ca.gov/mrd/index.html>
<http://www.dfg.ca.gov/mrd/fishcon1.html>
- **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency**
www.epa.gov/waterscience/fish/advisory.html

For information about the fish you buy, contact:

- **U.S. Food and Drug Administration
Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition**
(888) SAFEFOOD
www.cfsan.fda.gov/seafood1.html

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