

Fish Facts For Families: Choose Fish Low in Mercury

Everyone, including pregnant women, should eat fish and shellfish for their many benefits. These foods are a great source of protein and other nutrients. They are low in saturated fat, and rich in healthy omega-3 fatty acids. Fish is the main food source of omega-3 fatty acids, especially fatty fish that live in cold water.

Fish and shellfish are good for the health of your heart. They are also important for growth and development both in the womb before birth and throughout childhood.

Recently people have become worried about the safety of eating fish and shellfish. One concern is about mercury. Fortunately, most seafood contains only tiny amounts of mercury.

A few types of fish and shellfish contain higher amounts of mercury that could harm an unborn baby or a young child's developing nervous system. The higher-mercury fish are usually big, predatory fish that have eaten lots of smaller lower-mercury fish.

Women who could become pregnant, women who are pregnant, nursing mothers, and young children are advised to eat less of or avoid higher-mercury fish, and to eat fish that is low in mercury instead.



Fish to Eat Less Than Once per Month

"White", "albacore" or "bluefin" canned tuna.
(More detail on reverse.)

Women who might become pregnant or who are pregnant or nursing should eat less than one can of white tuna per month because it may contain more mercury than "light" tuna. Young children should consume less than half a can per month. Both women and children should limit bluefish, grouper, orange roughy and lobster to one serving per month.

High-Mercury Fish to Avoid

- Fresh or frozen tuna steaks
- Swordfish, shark, marlin, king mackerel or tilefish (golden bass or golden snapper from Gulf of Mexico) steaks
- Muskelunge (freshwater)
- Walleye (freshwater)

Women who might become pregnant or who are pregnant or nursing and young children should avoid these large, long-lived fish because they are high in mercury. Men and other women can eat one serving of these fish per month.

Low-Mercury Fish/Shell Fish: Enjoy More Often

Anchovies	Mackerel, Atlantic	Shrimp
Catfish, farmed	Oysters	Sole
Clams	Pollock, Alaskan/ Atlantic	Tilapia
Cod, Atlantic		Trout
Flounder	Salmon, farm	White fish
Herring, Atlantic	Salmon, wild	
Haddock	Sardines	
	Scallops, farmed	

- Breaded fish such as frozen fish cakes, fish sticks, and breaded fish sandwiches contain low mercury fish
- Canned sardines and anchovies
- Canned salmon, usually wild, Pacific salmon (read the label to be sure)

Medium-Mercury Fish/Shell Fish: Enjoy Less Often

Crab	Mussels	Halibut
Golden bass, Atlantic	Tuna, skip jack	Smelt
	Perch	Snapper

- "Light" canned tuna such as skipjack, yellowfin or tongol (read the label to be sure)

A Summary of Recommendations for Eating Fish

Age group	Eating low- or medium-mercury fish	Eating high-mercury fish including albacore tuna
Women of child-bearing age	No more than two 170 gram portions of low to medium-mercury commercial fish per week	Limit to less than one serving or can per month
Women who are pregnant or breastfeeding	No more than two 170 gram portions of low-mercury commercial fish per week	Limit to less than one serving or can per month
Young children	Only two 85 gram portions of low-mercury commercial fish per week	Limit to less than a half serving or half a can per month

The Salmon Question

Salmon is a nutritious fish available fresh, frozen or canned. Canadian-farmed Atlantic salmon contains higher levels of certain chemicals than does Pacific salmon. (Note that canned salmon is almost always Pacific or "wild" salmon.)

Organochlorines are a group of toxic chemicals, including PCBs and dioxins, which contaminate the environment and the food chain. The amount of these contaminants in Atlantic salmon is still within government safety limits. However, you can lower the amount of organochlorines in your Atlantic salmon meal even more with careful cooking. Simply remove the skin and some of the brown fatty meat before cooking.



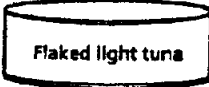
What About Sport Fish?

Sport fish is fish caught by family and friends in local lakes and rivers. Some of these fish can be eaten by anyone at any age. However, certain types of fish, especially larger fish, are contaminated. These should be either limited or avoided completely, especially by young children and women of childbearing age.

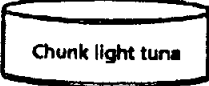
If you eat sport fish, you need to get a copy of the Guide to Eating Ontario Sport Fish, Ontario Ministry of the Environment. The guide is published every other year, and is available at www.ene.gov.on.ca/envision/guide/index.htm.

Canned Tuna
Read the label!
Look for "light" vs. "white".

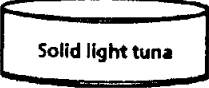
These are better choices:



Flaked light tuna

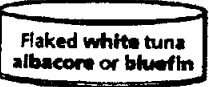


Chunk light tuna

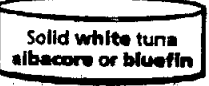


Solid light tuna

Eat less often:
Pregnant women and young children should eat less than once a month.



Flaked white tuna albacore or bluefin



Solid white tuna albacore or bluefin

170 grams = approx. 5 oz.
120 grams = approx. 4 oz.

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