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Fish Facts

PRINT-AND-GO GUIDE

Fish Facts for Pregnant and Nursing Moms and for Women Who May Become Pregnant

Fish and shellfish can be an important part of a healthy diet. They are a great source of protein and heart-healthy omega-3 fatty acids. What's more, some researchers believe low fish intake may be linked to depression in women during and after pregnancy. Research also suggests that omega-3 fatty acids consumed by pregnant women may aid in babies' brain and eye development.

Women who are or may become pregnant and nursing mothers need 12 ounces of fish per week to reap the health benefits. Unfortunately, some pregnant and nursing women do not eat any fish because they worry about mercury in seafood. Mercury is a metal that at high levels can harm the brain of your unborn baby — even before it is conceived. Mercury mainly gets into our bodies by eating large, predatory fish. Yet many types of seafood have little or no mercury at all. So the risk of mercury exposure depends on the amount and type of seafood you eat.

Women who are nursing, pregnant, or who may become pregnant can safely eat a variety of cooked seafood, but should steer clear of fish with high levels of mercury. Keep in mind that removing all fish from your diet will rob you of important omega-3 fatty acids. To reach 12 ounces while limiting exposure to mercury, follow these tips:

<p>Do not eat:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These fish that are high in mercury: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Swordfish • Tilefish • King mackerel • Shark • Uncooked fish or shellfish (such as clams, oysters, scallops), which includes refrigerated uncooked seafood labeled nova-style, lox, kippered, smoked, or jerky.
<p>Eat up to 6 ounces (about 1 serving) per week:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tuna steaks • Canned albacore or chunk white tuna, which has more mercury than canned light tuna



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<p>Eat up to 12 ounces (about 2 servings) per week of cooked fish and shellfish with little or no mercury, such as:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shrimp, crab • Clams, oysters, scallops • Canned light tuna • Salmon • Pollock • Catfish • Cod • Tilapia
<p>Check before eating fish caught in local waters.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State health departments have guidelines on fish from local waters. Or get local fish advisories at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency website (http://www.epa.gov). • If you are unsure about the safety of a fish from local waters, only eat 6 ounces per week and don't eat any other fish that week.
<p>Eat a variety of cooked seafood rather than just a few types.</p>	

Foods supplemented with DHA/EPA (such as “omega-3 eggs”) and prenatal vitamins supplemented with DHA are other sources of the type of omega-3 fatty acids found in seafood.

Content reviewed June 25, 2010, by:

Eric Rimm, Sc.D.
 Associate Professor of Medicine
 Harvard Medical School
 Associate Professor of Epidemiology and Nutrition
 Harvard School of Public Health
 2010 U.S. Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee Member

Content last updated August 20, 2010.