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FISH CONTAMINATION EDUCATION COLLABORATIVE (FCEC)



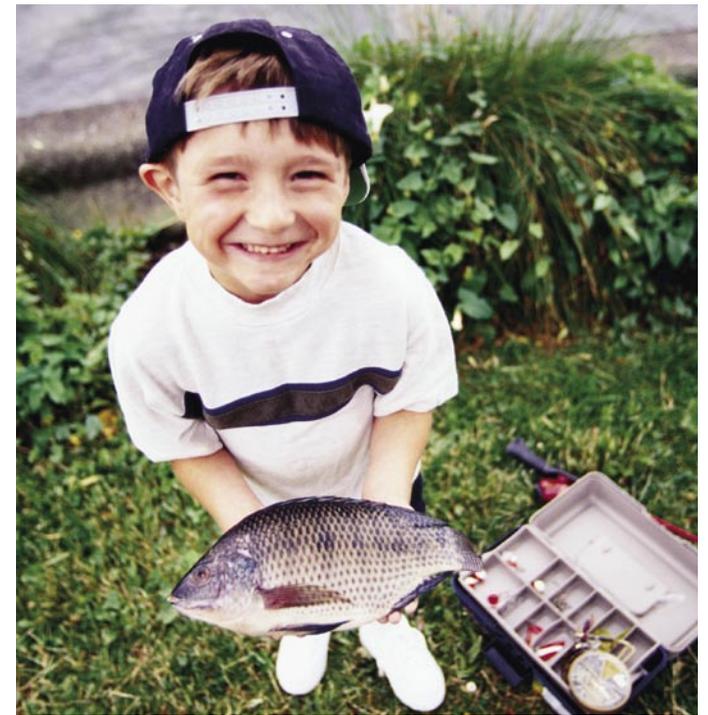
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Healthy Fish, Healthy Families

How you can enjoy the benefits of seafood, while making smart choices to lower the risks of pollution

FISH and other SEAFOOD

can play an important role in a good diet. Because fish are high in protein but low in unhealthy fats, they make a great alternative to red meat. Fish are a good source of vitamins and minerals. They also contain nutrients called omega-3 fatty acids, which can prevent heart disease and may help with healthy brain development.

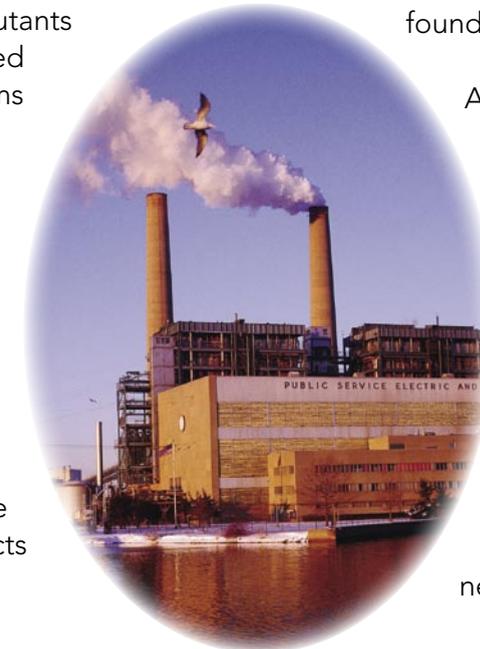


Why are some fish safer than others?

Pollution that reaches our lakes, streams, rivers, and oceans can end up in the fish caught there. Two common pollutants — mercury and PCBs — are linked to learning and memory problems in children, heart problems, and possibly cancer.

Mercury pollution comes from power plant smokestacks, mining, and other industrial activities. When mercury lands in bodies of water, it moves up the food chain from the tiniest fish to the bigger ones that eat them. The older and larger these fish get, the more mercury collects in their flesh.

PCBs are industrial chemicals that are now outlawed but are still present in water and soil. PCBs are found in fatty parts of certain fish.



Are these pollutants a reason to stop eating fish and shellfish? Not at all. Although some kinds of seafood contain too much mercury and PCBs, others contain very little. By varying the kinds of fish in your diet and following certain guidelines, you can help protect your health and enjoy all the benefits of fish. The advice here is more cautious than federal guidelines because doctors and other healthcare providers believe more protection is needed.

Who should choose their fish carefully?

Too much mercury and PCBs can cause health problems for anyone. Because they alter the way young brains develop, these pollutants can harm babies and children most of all. Both mercury and PCBs linger in the body and build up over time. They can pass from a pregnant woman or a nursing mother to her baby.



It's especially important for all children under 15, teenage girls, and women who are pregnant or could get pregnant to avoid eating fish that have high levels of mercury or PCBs.

What fish choices make sense?

Here are general guidelines for women of child-bearing age, children under 15, and teenage girls:

- **Follow local and state fish advisories**, found at www.epa.gov/ostwater/fish/, which tell you when to avoid eating certain fish that you or your friends and family catch.
- **Eat a variety of fish and seafood from the green section of the chart at right — up to 2 servings (6 ounces = one adult serving) each week.**
- **If you eat fish or seafood from the yellow section of the chart, eat only 1 serving of fish that week.**
- **Salmon are low-mercury but farmed salmon may be high in PCBs or other pollutants compared with wild.** Choose fresh/frozen wild salmon twice a month, but limit farmed salmon to every other month. The safest wild salmon are canned and may be eaten weekly.
- **Serve children “chunk light” canned tuna.** Canned albacore and fresh tuna, like other fish in the yellow section of the chart, may contain too much mercury for children, even in kid-size portions.
- **Children may eat the same number of servings of low-mercury fish as adults, but limit the size of children’s portions based on their age and weight.** (See box at left.)



What About Kids?

Children are often picky eaters who ask for the same foods, meal after meal. Try to get kids hooked on a wide variety of fish and shellfish from the green section of the chart. Children’s portions should be smaller than adults ones. One serving might be 1–2 ounces for a toddler, but 2–3 ounces for an older, larger child.

Shrimp, one favorite with kids, is low in pollutants. Tuna does contain mercury, but levels in canned chunk light tuna are usually low. White or albacore tuna, fresh, and frozen tuna all come from bigger fish with much higher levels of mercury, so children probably should not eat them. Fish sticks and fish sandwiches are typically made from fish that are low in pollutants.

Cooking Salmon and Other Fatty Fish

PCBs collect in the fatty parts of fish. You can take these steps to reduce PCB risks when cooking salmon, bluefish, and other fatty fish:

- Trim away fatty areas such as the belly, top of the back, and dark meat along the side.
- Remove or puncture the skin before cooking to allow fat to drain off.
- Broil, grill, roast or steam the fish on a rack to allow fat to drain.
- Do not fry large, fatty types of fish such as salmon and bluefish.
- Throw away fat drippings. Don’t use them in other cooking.



NOTE: *These steps will not change the mercury levels in fish.*

Where can I find more information?

Physicians for Social Responsibility
www.mercuryaction.org

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
local, state, and federal fish advisories web site
www.epa.gov/ostwater/fish/

This brochure was adapted from the fully referenced *Fish Consumption to Promote Good Health and Minimize Contaminants: A Quick Reference Guide for Clinicians*, published by ARHP and PSR.

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To obtain additional copies of this brochure or other PSR patient brochures, please call (202) 667-4260.

Clip and save this **WALLET CARD** for use in grocery stores and restaurants.

Fish are listed here from the lowest to the highest mercury level, except salmon, which are treated separately in the inset box. Other fatty fish that may contain PCBs or other non-mercury pollutants are marked with a ✖. Fish that have rarely been tested are marked with a ?. Seafood that has been over-harvested is marked with a *

We advise limiting your consumption of these fish to allow their populations to recover.

Clip this wallet card, fold it twice, where indicated, and consult it when grocery shopping or dining out.

PSR/ARHP Guide to Healthy Fish		
Enjoy up to 2 servings each week	<p>LOWEST MERCURY LEVELS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? Clams ? Oysters ? Shrimp Tilapia Sardines Crawfish Haddock Trout (freshwater) ✖ Herring Catfish Flatfish (includes flounder and sole) Mackerel (Atlantic) Scallops Crab (Blue, King, and Snow) Pollock Shad (American) Squid Tuna (canned chunk light) Lobster (spiny) Mackerel Chub (Pacific) * Cod Perch (Freshwater) Skate Halibut Mackerel – Spanish (S. Atlantic) * Monkfish * Snapper Weakfish (Sea Trout) Bass (saltwater; includes sea bass/striped bass/rockfish) 	
	<p>KEY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✖ contain PCBs or other pollutants ? rarely tested for mercury * overfished 	
	1 serving a week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lobster (Northern/American) FOLD ✖ Bluefish Tuna (canned, white albacore) Tuna (fresh/frozen) Mackerel – Spanish (Gulf of Mexico) For more information, visit www.mercuryaction.org. * Orange Roughy * Grouper
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Salmon – canned Pacific: 2 servings/week ✖ – wild/Pacific (fresh/frozen): 2 servings/month ✖ – farmed/Atlantic (fresh/frozen): 1 serving every 2 months
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mackerel – King (Atlantic & Gulf of Mexico) * Shark * Swordfish * Tilefish (Gulf of Mexico) <p style="text-align: right;">HIGHEST MERCURY LEVELS</p>