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ADVICE ON FISH CONSUMPTION

ANSWERS TO COMMON QUESTIONS MERCURY IN FISH

Yes. Fish is a highly nutritious food. Fish is an excellent source of high quality protein, is rich in important vitamins and minerals such as vitamin D and iodine, as well as the omega-3 fatty acids. These nutrients provide important health benefits both to you and the developing baby.

By being informed about mercury and knowing the kinds of fish to limit in your diet, you can prevent any harm to your unborn child and still enjoy the health benefits of eating fish. See the table 'Advice on Fish Consumption' for guidance on the types of fish to limit in your diet if you are pregnant or planning pregnancy.

No. The benefits of breastfeeding your baby far outweighs any risk posed by the small amount of mercury that may be present in breast milk.

The critical time for the baby is while it is still developing in the womb. This is why FSANZ recommends that women start to limit their exposure to mercury from fish prior to pregnancy. By doing this it means you will reduce the amount of mercury in your body before getting pregnant. If you have limited your exposure to mercury up to and during pregnancy, the amount of mercury transferred through breast milk will be very low. As a precaution however you might like to consider limiting your mercury exposure while breastfeeding. Simply follow the same advice as for pregnant women.

Yes. Fish is a highly nutritious food. Fish is an excellent source of high quality protein, is rich in important vitamins and minerals such as vitamin D and iodine, as well as the omega-3 fatty acids. These nutrients provide important

health benefits for young children because of their growth and development needs.

But remember, the Australian Dietary Guidelines recommend that a variety of foods be consumed. See the table 'Advice on Fish Consumption' for guidance on the types of fish to limit in your children's diet, noting the smaller serving size for young children (75 grams per serve).

Yes. Swordfish contains high levels of omega-3 fatty acids but a number of other fish - such as mackerel, silver warehou, atlantic salmon, canned salmon and tuna in oil, herrings and sardines are also good sources of omega-3 fatty acids. These fish have much lower mercury levels compared to swordfish, therefore they may be eaten more frequently (e.g. 2-3 times per week).

Yes. In general, it is safe for all population groups, including pregnant women, to consume 2-3 serves of any type of tuna per week (canned or fresh). Canned tuna generally has lower levels of mercury than other tuna because the tuna used for canning are smaller species that are generally caught when less than 1 year old. FSANZ has calculated that it is safe for all population groups to consume a snack can of tuna (95 grams) everyday, assuming no other fish is eaten. But remember, the Australian Dietary Guidelines recommend that a variety of foods be consumed.

No. The mercury content of fish is not reduced by processing techniques such as canning or freezing or by cooking.

The advice to moderate fish intake relates mainly to the large fish, like shark, flake and billfish (including swordfish, broadbill

and marlin). If your favourite fish is flake remember FSANZ's advice to limit intake and instead consider eating a variety of other types of fish. (Note that flake should not be confused with hake, which is a small white fish that does not have higher mercury levels).

Like all foods, fish should be eaten as part of a varied and balanced diet. Over-consumption of any single food group, particularly to the exclusion of other foods, is not recommended because it can lead to dietary imbalances and may increase your intake of potentially harmful substances in food, such as mercury. If you do eat more than 2-3 serves of fish per week, it is important that you eat a variety of fish, and that you avoid those fish with the high mercury levels such as shark, flake and billfish. This is especially important if you are pregnant or intending to become pregnant.

Fish oil products and supplements are not a major source of dietary mercury and there is no recommendation to restrict intake of these products on the basis of mercury content.

No. Crustacea (including prawns, lobsters, and crabs) and molluscs (including oysters and calamari) generally contain lower levels of mercury than finfish. Also crustacea and molluscs tend not be consumed as frequently. Overall this means they are not a significant source of mercury for the average consumer. However, if you consume large amounts of these foods on a regular basis, they may contribute significantly to your mercury exposure.



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