



## A Guide to Eating Fish for Women, Children and Families

### Is fish good for me?

Yes. It is an excellent source of protein and many other nutrients. Fish contains the omega-3 fats DHA and EPA.

DHA helps the brain, eyes and nerves of the fetus and child develop. Pregnant or breastfeeding women or women who could become pregnant, should eat fish to get DHA. EPA is an omega-3 fat that helps prevent heart disease.

### Are there risks to eating fish?

Yes. Fish may contain mercury. Large fish that live a long time and eat other fish contain the most mercury, which builds up in the tissue of the fish. When we eat these fish, the mercury builds up in our bodies.

If you are pregnant, breastfeeding, or could become pregnant, you should avoid or rarely eat fish that are high in mercury. Fetuses and infants exposed to high levels of mercury may have problems with learning, walking and talking.

### Can I safely eat fish?

If you are pregnant or breastfeeding or could become pregnant, you can still enjoy the benefits of eating fish if you choose carefully and eat a variety of fish. You can also give fish to your children as long as you avoid or rarely feed them fish high in mercury. Use this guide to help choose fish for you and your family.

### What about canned tuna?

There are different types of canned tuna. Read the label and choose "light" tuna because it is low in mercury. Choose "white" or Albacore tuna less often.

### What about salmon?

Salmon provides a lot of omega-3 fats and is low in mercury. However, there are some concerns about farmed salmon, including:

- low levels of pollutants, such as PCBs, have been found in the fat of farmed salmon
- the transfer of diseases and parasites from farmed to wild salmon
- the number of fish needed to feed farmed salmon.

Wild salmon is lower in PCBs and has fewer ecological concerns than farmed salmon. Most canned salmon is wild. To lower the amount of pollutants in salmon, remove the fat and skin before cooking. Grill, broil or barbecue your fish so that the extra fat can drip off.

### What about raw fish?

Health Canada recommends that pregnant women avoid eating raw fish and raw shellfish. They may carry bacteria that can cause serious illness.

### I am pregnant and I don't eat fish. Should I take an omega-3 fish oil supplement?

It is not known how much you would need to take to help your fetus develop. If you choose to take supplements, read the label carefully. Look for those that say they have been tested for contaminants. You may also look for omega-3 that are made from marine plant sources. Fish liver oil contains high levels of Vitamin A which could cause birth defects.

### Can I eat sport fish?

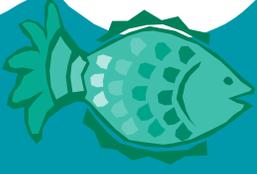
Sport fish are fish caught in local lakes and rivers. Some of these fish may be safe to eat. If you eat sport fish, check the Guide to Eating Ontario Sport Fish at [www.ene.gov.on.ca/envision/guide/index.htm](http://www.ene.gov.on.ca/envision/guide/index.htm) or phone 1-800-820-2716 to get a free copy.

### What about the environmental impact of eating fish?

Poor fisheries management can result in habitat damage, threats to other aquatic life and overfishing. For more information on making the best environmental fish choices refer to [www.seachoice.org](http://www.seachoice.org).



Health Canada recommends eating at least two Canada's Food Guide Servings of fish each week that are high in omega-3 fats and low in mercury. See *Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide* at [www.healthcanada.gc.ca/foodguide](http://www.healthcanada.gc.ca/foodguide).



# Eat a Variety of Fish

\* = A serving size may not be the same size as the portion you eat in a meal. One Canada's Food Guide Serving is 75 grams or 2.5 ounces or about half a cup.

★ = High omega-3 fats (good for your heart)

## Safe to Eat Every Day (Very Low Mercury)

- 1 serving\* a **day** for children
- 2 servings\* a **day** for women who are pregnant, breastfeeding or who could become pregnant, including teenage girls
- Unlimited servings\* for men, teenage boys and women over 50

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| • Basa                                       | • Pollock                               |
| • Capelin                                    | ★Salmon, Canned                         |
| • Kamaboko (Fish Cake, Processed White Fish) | ★Salmon (Chum, Coho, Pink Wild Pacific) |
| • Milk fish                                  | • Sea Urchin                            |
| • Octopus                                    | • Silver Pomfret                        |
| • Oysters                                    | • Tilapia                               |

## Safe to Eat Often (Low Mercury)

- 2 servings\* a **week** for children
- 4 servings\* a **week** for women who are pregnant, breastfeeding or who could become pregnant, including teenage girls
- Unlimited servings\* for men, teenage boys and women over 50

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| ★Anchovies (Fresh/Frozen)  | ★Salmon (Chinook, Sockeye, Steelhead)               |
| ★Arctic Char               | ★Sardines   |
| • Atlantic Cod             | • Scallops  |
| ★Atlantic Mackerel         | • Sea Cucumber                                      |
| • Clams                    | • Shiner  |
| • Flounder                 | • Shrimps/Prawns                                    |
| • Grass Carp               | • Smelt (Atlantic, Lake)                            |
| • Haddock                  | • Sole (Dover, Perrale)                             |
| ★Herring                   | • Squid   |
| • Mussels (Blue)           | ★Trout (Rainbow)                                    |
| • Porgie                   | • Tuna, Canned Light, (Skipjack, Tongol, Yellowfin) |
| ★Salmon (Atlantic, Farmed) |   |

## Safe to Eat Sometimes (Medium Mercury)

- 1-2 servings\* a **month** for children
- 2-4 servings\* a **month** for women who are pregnant, breastfeeding or who could become pregnant, including teenage girls
- 4 servings\* a **week** for men, teenage boys and women over 50

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| • Atlantic Halibut                          | • Perch                                     |
| • Black Pomfret                             | • Red Snapper                               |
| • Bluefin Tuna Steak                        | • Sablefish (Black Cod)                     |
| • Catfish                                   | • Skate                                     |
| • Gouper                                    | • Snapper (Various Species)                 |
| • Halibut                                   | ★Trout (Lake, Various Species)              |
| • Jackfish                                  | • Tuna Steak (Skipjack, Southern Yellowfin) |
| ★Kingfish (King Mackerel, Spanish Mackerel) | • Tuna, Canned White (Albacore)             |
| • Lake Whitefish                            | • Whiting                                   |
| • Mahi Mahi                                 |   |

## Avoid or Eat Rarely (High Mercury)

- Less than 1 serving\* a **month** for children
- Less than 1 serving\* a **month** for women who are pregnant, breastfeeding or who could become pregnant, including teenage girls
- No more than 1 serving\* a **week** for men, teenage boys and women over 50

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| • Barracuda   | • Tilefish                               |
| ☒ Buffalo   | • Tuna Steak (Various Species, Bigeye)   |
| ★Escolar (Snake Mackerel)                                   |  |
| • Marlin  | ☒ = Not high in mercury but high in PCBs |
| ☒ Pickerel (Pike, Sauger, Walleye, Yellow Pickerel, Zander) |  |