

What You Need To Know

Fish is a healthy high-protein, low-fat food that can be a part of a balanced diet for you and your family. But some fish have levels of mercury that may be harmful to the developing brain.

► If you eat fish once a week or more you may need to change:

 the kinds of fish you eat

 how often you eat certain fish

► If you are pregnant or could become pregnant, breastfeeding, or have young children, follow these guidelines when eating fish:

~Do not eat~

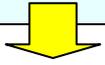
any type or form of (including raw, cooked, dried, smoked, or jerky):

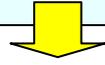
 **Kajiki (pacific blue marlin)**

 **Shark**

 **Swordfish (shutome)**

~Limit eating these fish~

Group A Eat no more than once every two weeks from this group

<ul style="list-style-type: none">♦ ahi (bigeye/tombo/yellowfin tuna)<ul style="list-style-type: none">♦ ono (wahoo)♦ opah (moonfish)

Group B Eat no more than once a week from this group

<ul style="list-style-type: none">♦ aku (skipjack tuna)♦ canned tuna♦ cod (butterfish)♦ grouper♦ halibut♦ mahimahi (dolphin fish)♦ nairagi (striped marlin)♦ orange roughy♦ pollock

Mercury builds up in the body. If you eat fish from Group A, wait two weeks before eating any more fish from Group A or B.

~ Tips ~

 A typical serving size of fish is 3 ounces for a child and 6 ounces for an adult. Of course, if your serving sizes are smaller, you can eat fish more frequently.

 3 ounces of fish is about the size and thickness of a deck of playing cards.

~Seafood you can eat anytime~

 akule

 awa (milkfish)

 moi

 mullet

 opelu

 salmon

 fish small enough to fit in a frying pan whole

 ika (squid or calamari) and tako (octopus)

 scallops and shrimp



1. What is mercury?

Mercury is a metal that can come from natural and man-made sources. It is found in rocks, soil, and water.

2. Why is mercury in fish harmful?

- ▶ Mercury can be very harmful to the brain and even small amounts can damage a brain that is just starting to form or grow. That's why young children, unborn and breast-fed babies are at the most risk.
- ▶ Too much mercury may affect a child's behavior and lead to learning problems later in life.

No one knows what the "safe" level of mercury is. However, the advice in this fact sheet is designed with a safety factor to protect against harm.

3. How do fish get high levels of mercury?

- ▶ Fish take in mercury from water as it passes over their gills.
- ▶ As reef animals and small fish absorb this harmful substance it stays inside their bodies.
- ▶ As bigger fish eat small fish, the mercury levels increase. Those at "the top of the food chain" are the ones with the high levels.

4. Can cooking fish get rid of the mercury?

No, there is no method of cooking or cleaning fish that will reduce the amount of mercury.

"Should I stop eating fish?"

No! Remember, fish is a good food and part of a healthy diet. So don't stop eating fish!

5. What if I have already been eating more than advised?

Mercury leaves the body slowly. If you have eaten more than you should, do not eat any of the fish that should be limited for a few months.

6. Is there more I can find out about mercury in our fish?

For more information
call the
Department of Health at
808-586-4249



Neil Abercrombie, Governor
Loretta J. Fuddy, A.C.S.W., Director of Health

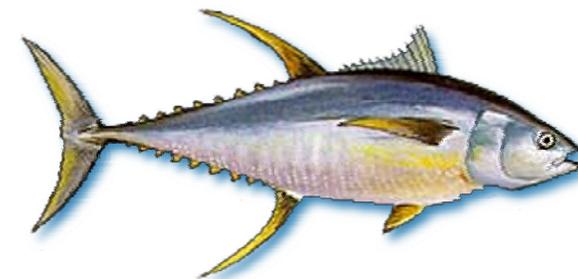
Nondiscrimination in Services

We provide access to our activities without regard to race, color, national origin (including language), age, sex, religion, or disability. Write or call the program noted above or our departmental Affirmative Action Officer at Box 3378, Honolulu, HI 96801-3378 or at (808) 586-4616 (voice/tty) within 180 days of a problem.

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A Local Guide to Eating Fish Safely



For

- ▶ **Pregnant Women**
- ▶ **Nursing Mothers**
- ▶ **Young Children**

Hawaii State Department of Health

