

EATING FISH

Benefits

Fish (including shellfish) are highly nutritious and are an important part of a healthy diet.

Fish are high in protein, low in fat, and a good source of important nutrients. These nutrients include healthy fats called omega-3 fatty acids that are good for both adults and children.

For adults, eating at least 8 ounces of a variety of fish per week, including some high in omega-3s, may prevent heart disease.

Omega-3 fatty acids are essential for healthy brain, eye, and nerve development in babies and children. By eating at least 8 ounces of fish per week, pregnant and breastfeeding women can pass these nutrients on to their babies.

Risks

Some fish may contain high levels of mercury and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs).

Mercury is harmful to the brain and nervous system, and **PCBs** might cause cancer. **Everyone should limit or avoid fish that have high levels of mercury or PCBs.**

It is especially important for **women ages 18–45 and children ages 1–17** to avoid eating fish that have high levels of mercury. Because their brains are still developing, babies and children are more sensitive to the harmful effects of mercury. Exposure to mercury can cause them to learn more slowly.

So...

Women ages 18–45 (childbearing years) should eat fish, but they should choose fish low in chemicals and high in omega-3s. Eating fish is good for both pregnant women and their babies.

Fish caught by you, family, or friends

Local fish advisories guide you on what and how much to eat. Always follow advisories and fishing regulations where you fish. See complete advisory for more information.

Eat this

These fish and shellfish are low in mercury and can be eaten **more** often:

- **Delta — all areas:** Rainbow and steelhead trout, American shad, clams
- **Central or South Delta:** Catfish, bluegill and other sunfish, crayfish
- **Most CA lakes and reservoirs:** Rainbow trout
- **Sacramento and Mokelumne rivers:** Chinook (king) salmon

Fish caught in the Central/South Delta (south of HWY 12) generally have less mercury than fish from many other places in CA, including the Delta north of Highway 12, Sacramento River, San Joaquin River (south of Stockton), and many CA lakes and reservoirs.

Not this

These fish are high in mercury. Some also have PCBs. They should be eaten **less** often:

- **Delta — all areas, CA rivers, bays, and the ocean:** striped bass and sturgeon
- **Most CA lakes and reservoirs:** bass and carp
- **Port of Stockton:** all fish and shellfish (due to PCBs)

Women 18-45 and children 1-17 should not eat any of these fish.

PCBs are in the fat and skin of the striped bass and sturgeon. To reduce the PCBs, eat only the skinless fillet. Remove the fat and skin before cooking and cook the fish all the way through, letting the juices drain away. **These steps will NOT get rid of any of the mercury.**

Stores/restaurants

Federal guidelines provide advice for fish from stores and restaurants.

Some fish from stores and restaurants have high levels of mercury. Federal guidelines for women ages 18–45 and children ages 1–17 advise the following:

- **Do not eat shark, swordfish, tilefish or king mackerel.** These fish are high in mercury.
- Eat 8 to 12 ounces* each week of a variety of fish and shellfish that are low in mercury.
- Limit white (albacore) tuna to 6 ounces* per week.

How much should I eat?

If you eat the recommended number of servings in a week that is allowed under one type of advisory or guidelines, do not eat any more fish that week. For example, **women 18-45 or children 1-17 can eat:**

Two servings (12 ounces*) a week of catfish from the Central or South Delta. Do not eat any other fish from any source that week.

OR

Two servings (12 ounces*) a week of fish or shellfish that are low in mercury from a store or restaurant. Do not eat any other fish from any source that week.

*Serve children portions appropriate for their age and calorie needs.

Remember

You can't tell the amount of chemicals in a fish by tasting or looking at it. To protect your health, and the health of your loved ones, follow the recommendations in the advisories.



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