

# Safety Tips

## Women and Children need to know about Mercury



Fish and shellfish are an important part of a healthy diet. Fish and shellfish contain high-quality protein and other essential nutrients, are low in saturated fat, and contain omega-3 fatty acids. A well-balanced diet that includes a variety of fish and shellfish can contribute to good heart health and children's proper growth and development. So, women and young children in particular should include fish or shellfish in their diets due to the many nutritional benefits.

Fish has protein and healthy fats, but some fish contain harmful chemicals like mercury and pesticides. Growing children, pregnant and breastfeeding women, and women who could become pregnant especially need to limit how much fish they eat. Use these tips to eat fish safely:

- **Do not eat: shark, swordfish, tilefish, or king mackerel.** These fish are highest in mercury.
- **Eat a variety of other fish.** See accompanying chart for variety of fish and servings.
- **Eat up to 12 ounces** (2 average meals) a week of a variety of fish and shellfish that are lower in mercury.
  - The most commonly eaten fish that are low in mercury are shrimp, canned light tuna, salmon and catfish.
  - Another commonly eaten fish albacore "white" tuna has more mercury than canned light tuna. So, when choosing your two meals of fish and shellfish, you may eat up to 6 ounces (one average meal) of albacore tuna per week.
- **Avoid raw fish and shellfish.**
- **Broil, grill, bake, or steam fish on a rack.** Throw away the drippings or juice.

Arkansas has many gorgeous lakes and rivers throughout the state and one leisure pass time is fishing for many families in the state. However, mercury has become a problem throughout the country including Arkansas. Mercury started to become an issue in the last 10 to 20 years. Experts are still studying why. You just need to know the guidelines for eating fish from areas under a mercury notice. In the meantime, here are some recommendations from the Arkansas Health Department that can reduce health risks from mercury:

- When you eat from lakes with notices, follow the fish notice guidelines available from the Arkansas Department of Health.
- Eat smaller fish instead of larger ones. (In most cases, younger, smaller fish contain less mercury).
- Choose fish like bream, buffalo, red horse, and crappie that don't mainly eat other fish.
- Eat farm/pond-raised catfish. They are low in mercury.
- Eat smaller amounts of small fish when eating a meal. You can eat up to 6 ounces (one average meal) per week of fish you catch from local waters, but do not consume any other fish during that week.

Common freshwater fish that are high in mercury are:

- Smallmouth bass
- Walleye
- Largemouth bass
- Lake trout and Northern pike

Just remember, mercury is a problem we can all safely live with. Fish can be an important source of protein. You don't have to quit eating fish from Arkansas' lakes and rivers. Just learn to eat them safely!!

## Weekly Servings of Fish and Shellfish

Recommended for Pregnant and Breastfeeding Women, and Young Children  
Based on adult serving size 6 ounces. A child's serving should be smaller.

Very Low in Mercury – Eat Up to 5 Servings a Week	
Anchovies	Pollock
Clams	Salmon*
Crawfish/Crayfish	Sardines
Hake	Shrimp
Herring	Tilapia
Oysters	Whiting
*Some farmed salmon contain levels of other contaminants	

Low in Mercury – Eat Up to 2 Servings a Week	
Butterfish	Mullet
Catfish	Mussels
Cod	Perch (Ocean or White)
Crab	Croaker (Atlantic)
Scallops	Flounder
Sole	Haddock
Jacksmelt	Squid/Calamari
Mackerel (N. Atlantic)	Trout (Freshwater)
Tuna (Canned Light)	Whitefish

High In Mercury – Eat No More Than 1 Serving a Week	
Bluefish	Skate
Eel	Snapper
Halibut	Lobster
Monkish	Sablefish
Sheepshead	Weakfish/Sea Trout
Bass (Black, Saltwater, Striped)	
Tuna (Albacore or Canned White)*	
*Limit to 4 ounces	

Too High in Mercury – Don't Eat These Fish
Mackerel (King or Spanish)
Tuna (Fresh, Steaks, Sushi)
Chilean Sea Bass
Swordfish
Marlin
Orange Roughy
Shark
Grouper

### Sources:

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Teresa Henson, Program Associate

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