

# Health Benefits of Eating Fish and Minimizing Mercury Concerns

Fish and seafood can provide a valuable, nutritious addition to a healthy, balanced diet.

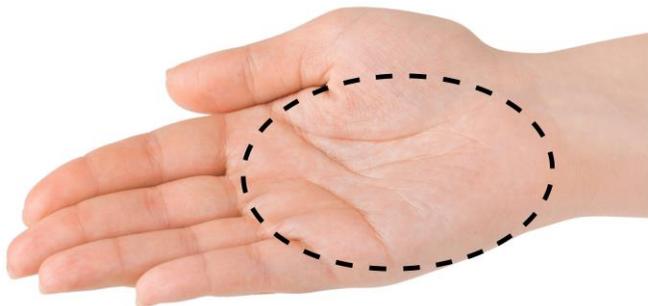
Fish and seafood are good sources of protein, omega-3 fatty acids, minerals and vitamins (including vitamin D) that promote healthy hearts, healthy growth, and brain and eye development of infants and children.

Health Canada recommends that all Canadians, including pregnant women and children, eat at least two servings of fish per week to benefit from the nutrients found in fish.

## Choose Fish Carefully

Some fish have higher levels of mercury, a naturally occurring element that can be harmful, especially to infants and unborn children. Limit intake of fish most likely to have higher mercury levels: shark, escolar, orange roughy, swordfish, and fresh or frozen tuna.

Women of childbearing age and children should eat a maximum of two servings of these fish (the size of that person's palm) twice a month.



When choosing canned tuna, light tuna generally has lower mercury than canned Albacore (or white) tuna.

Canned light tuna is the safest choice for women of childbearing age and children under 12.

Fish and seafood with lower mercury and higher levels of healthy fatty acids (omega-3) include: anchovy, Atlantic mackerel, blue crab, clam, lake whitefish, mullet, mussel, oyster, Pollock, rainbow trout, salmon, sardines, smelt, shrimp, and tuna (light, canned).

For further information on mercury in store bought fish and seafood, visit "Mercury in Fish: Questions and Answers" on Health Canada's website [www.hc-sc.gc.ca](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca).

## Maximize the Benefit of Eating Fish

- **Go for variety.** Eat a variety of fish and seafood that have lower levels of mercury or other chemicals. Generally smaller type of fish and fish that don't eat other fish tend to have lower mercury levels.
- **Prepare fish in a way that maximizes the health benefits.** Cook using lower fat preparation methods. Baked, broiled, steamed or grilled fish is healthier than fried or deep fried fish.



- Seniors, pregnant women, young children, and **people with weakened immune systems** should avoid eating raw or undercooked fish or shellfish, including sushi.

## Saskatchewan Fish

Saskatchewan has a rich resource of lakes, rivers and streams which contain a variety of fish. Fishing can provide a healthy source of food, a valuable traditional and cultural activity, economic value, and recreational activity for individuals and families.

Throughout the province, fish are monitored for mercury levels to ensure the health of people consuming Saskatchewan sport and commercial fish.

A guidance document for various types and sizes of fish from over 400 lakes in Saskatchewan is available by visiting <http://www.saskatchewan.ca> and searching for the *Fishing Consumption Guideline* or by contacting Ministry of Environment offices. This Guideline provides advice on the maximum consumption amounts for various fish, for the general population, women of child-bearing age, and children under 12.

A good rule of thumb for women who are or could become pregnant and for children under 12 is to eat more of:

- those fish that **don't** eat other fish (such as whitefish, rainbow trout, burbot, and grayling);
- the smaller sized fish that **do** eat other fish (such as walleye, jackfish, and lake trout).



## Saskatchewan Fish Available Commercially

Some Saskatchewan sport fish are available in restaurants, grocery stores or directly from licensed commercial fishers or processors.

Generally, for women of child-bearing age and children under 12, intake of commercial walleye, pike, lake trout, and steelhead trout should be limited to:

- two servings a week (if the serving is the size of that person's palm); or
- one serving a week (if the serving size is as big as that person's whole hand).



## Contact Us

The links below provide contact information for public health inspection offices throughout the province, as well as the Ministry of Environment:

<http://www.saskatchewan.ca/residents/health/understanding-the-health-care-system/saskatchewan-health-regions/regional-public-health-inspectors>

<http://www.saskatchewan.ca/residents/environment-public-health-and-safety/find-your-nearest-environment-office>

## Resources

Canadian Food Guide is available at your local Health Centre or the Health Canada website

[www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/index-eng.php](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/index-eng.php)