

Consumption Guidance for Purchased Fish

What are the contaminant levels of fish bought in supermarkets and restaurants? The United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has the authority to set contaminant tolerance levels to regulate the interstate sale of fish. In March 2004, the FDA and United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued a joint consumer advisory on mercury in fish. The FDA/EPA consumer advisory recommends women who may become pregnant, pregnant women, nursing mothers, and young children to avoid some types of fish and eat fish and shellfish that are lower in mercury.

FDA/EPA Consumer Advice (March 19, 2004) <http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/admehq3.html>

1. Do not eat shark, swordfish, king mackerel, or tilefish because they contain high levels of mercury.
2. Eat up to 12 ounces (2 average meals) a week of a variety of fish and shellfish that are lower in mercury.
 - a. Five of the most commonly eaten fish that are low in mercury are shrimp, canned light tuna, salmon, pollock, and catfish.
 - b. 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 of albacore tuna per week.
3. Check local advisories about the safety of fish caught by family and friends in your local, lake, rivers, and coastal areas. If no advice is available, eat up to 6 ounces per week of fish you catch from local waters, but don't consume any other fish during that week.

Please visit the FDA on the web <http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/seafood1.html> for more information regarding the FDA Seafood Program and what commercial fish species are safest to eat.

The table below provides general guidance on which commercial fish species to eat more often.

Commercial Fish Species		
Eat More of These		Eat Less or None of These
Anchovies	Ocean Perch	Swordfish
Catfish	Pollock	Shark
Cod	Salmon	King mackerel
Crawfish	Sardines	Tilefish
Flounder	Shellfish (oysters, shrimp, clams, scallops, crab, and lobster)	Tuna steak
Haddock	Tilapia	Albacore "white" tuna (canned)
Hake	Trout	Marlin
Herring		
Light tuna (canned)		