

Facts about Methylmercury and Seafood

The Food and Drug Administration advises that pregnant women, women of child-bearing age who may become pregnant, nursing mothers and young children should avoid eating SWORDFISH, KING MACKEREL, SHARK and TILEFISH.

Safeway is committed to offering you the finest seafood possible. We work tirelessly to provide you with the most wholesome seafood available. Seafood can be an important part of a balanced diet. It is a good source of high-quality protein and nutrients, is low in fat and contains vital omega-3 fatty acids.

The following information, based on advisories by the FDA and Environmental Protection Agency, addresses health and environmental issues about **methylmercury** in certain types of seafood.

What is methylmercury?

Methylmercury is formed from mercury, a naturally occurring element found in soil, rocks, lakes, streams and oceans. Mercury is also introduced into the environment by man-made sources, such as manufacturing operations and other pollutants. Mercury released into streams, lakes and oceans can accumulate and undergo a natural chemical transformation into methylmercury.

How does methylmercury get into fish?

Most fish have trace amounts of methylmercury that come from absorbing water and eating aquatic organisms. Large predatory fish species, which feed on smaller species and live longer lives, tend to accumulate higher levels of methylmercury than non-predatory fish and species that are lower on the food chain.

Should I be concerned about the amounts of methylmercury in the seafood?

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) advises that pregnant women, women of childbearing age who may become pregnant, nursing mothers and young children should avoid eating SWORDFISH - SHARK - KING MACKEREL - TILE FISH. These fish may contain higher levels of methylmercury that could pose developmental risks to unborn children and young children.

However, people in the above groups can consume up to 12 ounces (2 average meals) a week of a variety of fish and shellfish that are lower in methylmercury. According to the FDA, five of the most commonly eaten fish that are low in methylmercury are shrimp, canned light tuna, salmon, pollock, and catfish. Another commonly eaten fish, albacore "white" tuna has more mercury than canned light tuna. People in the groups above may eat up to 6 ounces (one average meal) of albacore tuna per week.

What about other fish?

Seafood is an important part of a healthy diet. Seafood is a good source of omega-3 fatty acids, a protein that has been shown to help combat certain types of cancer. Sources for omega-3 fatty acids are walnuts, salmon, albacore tuna, anchovies, cod, halibut, herring and trout. Shellfish, including clams, crabs, mussels, scallops and shrimp, are also good sources of omega-3 fatty acids.

Where can I find more information?

FDA food safety website at www.cfsan.fda.gov
EPA mercury website at www.epa.gov/mercury/
FMI Food Marketing Institute at <http://www.mcvitamins.com/mercury.htm>