

## What is the Best Way to Prepare Seafood?

Seafood is naturally nutritious and low in fat and calories (180-200 calories in most 6-ounce servings). It is important to select techniques and recipes that minimize fat, so you don't spoil the nutritional benefits of seafood. While cooking methods are important for maintaining the health benefits of seafood, mercury is found throughout the fish, so cleaning techniques will not reduce the amount of mercury in a fish meal.

### Healthy Cooking Methods Include:

Baking, broiling, poaching, steaming, grilling, microwaving, or pan-frying in a little butter or oil will minimize the amount of fat in your dish.

One standard technique that can be used for a variety of fish is to bake for 10 minutes at 400 degrees for each inch of thickness, turning the fish half-way through cooking.

### Avoid

Deep-frying and cream sauces will add fat and calories to a meal.

## How Do I Spot Quality Frozen Fish?

Packaging should never be damaged- don't buy packages covered in frost or ice crystals. These fish may have been stored a long time or thawed and refrozen. The color of fresh fish fillets vary but should always be bright and uniform, never chalky or yellow at the edge. Fillets should be moist and firm, and should always smell fresh and mild, never fishy.

## How Do I Store Fish at Home?

Keep fish on ice and out of direct sunlight. Cook and eat fresh fish or thawed frozen fish within 2 days. Fish can be kept in the freezer for up to 3 months. Cooked fish can be refrigerated for 3-4 days and frozen for one month.



## Should I Eat the Fish I Catch In Louisiana?

**YES!** Locally-caught fish are always fresher and in general, more nutritious than frozen fish. However, it is always wise to be informed of fish consumption advisories in your area. Follow recommendations outlined in advisories issued by the Louisiana Office of Public Health to avoid health risks.

**Louisiana Fish Advisories** can be found on the web at [www.seet.dhh.louisiana.gov](http://www.seet.dhh.louisiana.gov) or by calling 1-888-293-7020.

## Where Can I Find More Information?

### Seafood Information and Resources:

The Food & Drug Administration (FDA)  
Toll Free: 1-888-SAFEFOOD  
[www.cfsan.fda.gov/seafood1.html](http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/seafood1.html)

### Mercury levels in fish not in this brochure:

<http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~firf/sea-mehg.html>

### Mercury and its health effects:

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)  
<http://www.epa.gov/mercury/effects.htm>

### Fish consumption during pregnancy:

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)  
<http://www.epa.gov/waterscience/fishadvice/advice.html>

### Cooking and recipe ideas:

Louisiana Seafood and Promotion Marketing Board  
<http://www.louisianaseafood.com/>

### The National Fisheries Institute

[www.aboutseafood.com](http://www.aboutseafood.com)

## Acknowledgements

This brochure was produced by the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals (LDHH), Office of Public Health (OPH), Section of Environmental Epidemiology and Toxicology (SEET).

This public document was printed at a cost of \$00.08. In this printing 75,000 copies were produced. This document was produced by Department of Health and Hospitals Office of Public Health, P.O. Box 3234, Baton Rouge, LA 70821, to inform the public, under the authority of R.S. 36:258(B). It was printed in accordance with the standards for printing by state agencies established pursuant to R.S. 43:31.

# Promoting Healthy Living in Louisiana

## Seafood for a Healthy Lifestyle



Center for Environmental Health Services (CEHS),  
Section of Environmental Epidemiology & Toxicology  
(SEET)



## Why Should I Eat Fish?

Fish and shellfish are low-fat, low-calorie, high protein foods, which serve as a great source of vitamins, minerals and essential nutrients that benefit the heart, brain and body. One such group of nutrients, omega-3 fatty acids, has been linked to decreases in heart disease, depression and cancer. Omega-3's also promote healthy brain development in unborn babies and infants, and prevent developmental problems in young children.

## What are Some Concerns with Eating Fish?

Some types of fish may contain high levels of mercury that could pose health risks if these fish are eaten in large amounts over a long period of time. Mercury can damage the brain and other parts of the nervous system. Unborn babies, infants and young children are at the greatest risk from mercury because their nervous systems are still developing and any harm to those systems might be permanent. Minimizing exposure to mercury is particularly important for pregnant women, women planning to become pregnant, nursing women and children under the age of seven.

## How Much Fish Should I Eat?

You can maintain the healthy benefits of a diet that includes fish while reducing your exposure to mercury by limiting the amount and type of seafood you eat. Health experts recommend eating a variety of commercial seafood twice a week.

Adults should eat a total of 12 ounces per week (two 6-ounce meals), and young children should eat a total of 6 ounces per week (two 3-ounce meals). Six ounces of cooked fish is about the size of two decks of cards and is equivalent to ½ pound (8 ounces) of uncooked fish. For more information see the FDA's website listed at the back of this brochure.

*The FDA and EPA advise 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.*



## What Are the Best Commercial Fish to Eat?

*Fish low in mercury and high in omega-3 fatty acids are the best fish to eat. Everyone should eat up to TWO meals a week of fish low in mercury.*

### Best Choices

**Seafood low in mercury and high in omega-3 fatty acids:**

- Herring
- Mussels
- Oysters
- Salmon
- Sardines
- Whitefish

### More Great Choices

**Seafood low in mercury, but not as high in omega-3 fatty acids:**

- Light Canned Tuna
- Catfish
- Crab
- Crawfish
- Scallops, Clams
- Shrimp
- Squid
- Trout
- Flounder

### Fish to Limit

**Seafood that contain moderate levels of mercury:**

- Canned tuna (white/albacore)
- Halibut steak
- Tuna steak

Pregnant women, women planning to become pregnant, nursing women and young children can safely eat **ONE** meal per week of commercial "Fish to Limit" and up to **TWO** meals per week of a variety of fish lower in mercury (e.g., shrimp, canned light tuna, salmon, pollock and catfish).

- Eat fish high in omega-3's and low in mercury.
- Eat smaller, younger fish.
- Choose fish that don't eat other fish. Large, predator fish tend to build-up more mercury.

## What Fish Should I Avoid?

The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) advise that pregnant and nursing women, women planning to become pregnant and children under the age of seven should **NOT** eat the following fish:

### Fish to Avoid

**Seafood high in mercury:**

- King Mackerel
- Swordfish
- Shark
- Tilefish (golden bass or golden snapper)



Other adults and children over the age of 7 may safely eat up to **ONE** meal per week of fish high in mercury. Eating fish high in mercury lowers the heart healthy benefits of omega-3 fish oils.

## What about Other Common Fish Products?

**Chunk light tuna** (in a can or pouch) is safe to eat and contains less mercury than solid white or chunk white tuna. One 6-8 ounce can of chunk light tuna is one meal. You can eat up to **TWO** cans of chunk light tuna a week. You can eat up to one meal of albacore or tuna steak a week.

**Farm-raised fish** are low in mercury and may include catfish, tilapia, shrimp and mussels.

**Fish sticks, fast food sandwiches**, and other frozen, breaded fish products are safe for everyone to eat up to twice per week, but they are not high in omega-3 fatty acids and may be high in fat and calories.

**Imitation crab or lobster** is safe for everyone to eat.

**Seafood chowder and clam chowder** are safe for everyone.

## What if I Eat More than the Recommended Amount of Fish in a Week?

The amount of fish that is beneficial for you depends on your age, heart health and the types of fish you are eating. If you eat more than the recommended amount of fish in a week, you might want to talk to your doctor about what choices are right for you.