Fish and shellfish are nutritious foods for you and your family. For good health, you should eat them twice a week. Most seafood is very safe to eat. But some types of seafood may contain a chemical called mercury. Too much mercury is harmful. If you are pregnant or breastfeeding and have mercury in your body, it can get into your baby’s body, too.

**Why eat seafood?**

Seafood has healthy fats, called omega-3s, that your body needs. Omega-3s help babies’ brains develop. Omega-3s are also good for your heart and help prevent heart disease in adults. The healthiest seafood is low in mercury and high in omega-3s.

**What about seafood from stores or restaurants?**

Most seafood that you buy in stores or restaurants is very safe. But women and children should avoid seafood with high levels of mercury. Most shellfish, including shrimp, oysters, and crawfish, are low in mercury. Many kinds of fish, including catfish, pollock (fish sticks), and tilapia, are also low in mercury. The guide on the next page shows how much seafood is safe to eat.

**What about seafood that I catch, or that family or friends catch?**

There may be mercury or other chemicals in seafood from many places in the Gulf region. Always follow the local health advisory for the areas where your seafood was caught or collected. These advisories tell you the kinds of seafood that are safe to eat, and how much to eat. If there is no local health advisory, follow the guide on the next page.

**Are you planning to get pregnant?**

If you are planning to get pregnant, including seafood in your diet is good for you and especially good for your baby. Following the guide on the next page will protect your baby from mercury. Women under 46 years old should follow the guide, even if they are not planning to get pregnant.
SAFETY GUIDELINES FOR EATING SEAFOOD

**Women 18 – 45, especially if pregnant or breastfeeding**

**DO NOT EAT** shark, swordfish, tilefish, or king mackerel. These fish have high levels of mercury.

**Bought in a Store or Restaurant**

Eat up to **2 SERVINGS PER WEEK** of fish and shellfish bought in stores or restaurants.

**Caught by You, Family, or Friends**

Check for local health advisories in areas where fish are caught or shellfish are harvested. If there are no local advisories:

Eat up to **1 SERVING PER WEEK** of fish caught by you, family, or friends.

**Children 1 – 17**

Same as above but serve smaller portions

1 serving of seafood for an adult is about the size and thickness of your hand — about 6 ounces cooked or ½ pound (8 ounces) before cooking.

1 can of chunk light tuna is about 1 serving. You can eat up to two cans of chunk light tuna per week.

Other kinds of tuna, including canned albacore (white) tuna, have more mercury. You can eat 1 serving per week of these other kinds of tuna, but do not eat any other seafood that week.

**Tips for lowering mercury from the seafood you eat:**

- If you eat more than the recommended amount of seafood in a week, eat less the next week.
- Eat store-bought seafood like salmon, trout, herring, sardines, anchovies, and oysters. These fish and shellfish are healthiest because they have little or no mercury AND are high in omega-3s.
- Cleaning and cooking seafood will not get rid of the mercury. It’s better to eat seafood that has less mercury.
- While cooking will not get rid of mercury, it will kill harmful germs that can make you sick. Pregnant women and young children should not eat raw or partly cooked fish or shellfish.
- Do not eat the guts of the fish or crabs.
- For fish caught by you, family, or friends, eat smaller fish, which usually have less mercury than bigger fish.
- If you eat 1 serving of fish caught by you, family, or friends, do not eat any other seafood that week.

**For information about health advisories:**

Contact your local health department or locate your State agency at:

http://fish4health.net/

Adapted from materials developed by the Environmental Health Investigations Branch, California Department of Public Health