

FDA offers guidance on fish intake for kids, pregnant women

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(HealthDay)—A new U.S. government guideline classifies fish into

three categories of safety to help pregnant women, breast-feeding mothers and parents of young children make healthy choices.

The 62 types of fish and shellfish included in the guideline are sorted into: best choices: eat two to three servings a week; good choices: eat one serving a week; and fish to avoid.

Nearly 90 percent of fish eaten in the United States fall into the best choices category, according to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Fifty percent of [pregnant women](#) eat fewer than 2 ounces of fish a week, which is far less than the recommended amount, the FDA said. Fish offers nutritional benefits important for growth and development during pregnancy and early childhood, the agency said.

The FDA and EPA recommend two to three servings of lower-mercury fish per week, or 8 to 12 ounces total. Twelve ounces is the recommended maximum weekly consumption, according to the new guidelines.

Those amounts are consistent with past recommendations, and consistent with the 2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

Lower-mercury fish and shellfish, part of the best choices group, include some of the most commonly eaten varieties, such as shrimp, pollock, salmon, canned light tuna, tilapia, catfish and cod.

The FDA and EPA recommend only one serving per week of fish from the good choices category, which includes bluefish, grouper, halibut, tilefish from the Atlantic Ocean, and albacore white tuna (canned, fresh or frozen).

A typical serving of fish for adults is 4 ounces before cooking. Serving sizes for children should be smaller and adjusted for their age and total calorie needs. Children should eat a variety of fish once or twice a week, according to the guideline.

"Fish are an important source of protein and other nutrients for [young children](#) and women who are or may become pregnant, or are breast-feeding. This advice clearly shows the great diversity of fish in the U.S. market that they can consume safely," said Dr. Stephen Ostroff, FDA Deputy Commissioner for Foods and Veterinary Medicine.

"This new, clear and concrete advice is an excellent tool for making safe and [healthy choices](#) when buying fish," he said in an FDA news release.

All fish contain at least some mercury, which can harm the brain and nervous system if consumed in high amounts over time. Children, pregnant or breast-feeding women, and women of childbearing age should avoid seven types of fish with higher mercury levels: tilefish from the Gulf of Mexico; shark; swordfish; orange roughy; bigeye tuna; marlin, and king mackerel.

People who fish recreationally and eat their catch should check for local advisories about mercury and other contaminants. If no local advisory is available, eat just one fish meal a week. Clean and trim fat and skin from locally caught [fish](#), according to the guideline.

More information: The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has more from its guideline chart on [advice on eating fish](#).

[More Information](#)

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