

# Safe Fish to Consume During Pregnancy And Nursing

By Lauren Hirschfeld MS, RD, LDN

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You can protect your unborn child from the negative effects of mercury, dioxin, and PCBs by completely avoiding certain fish that are high in fat. The following fish can contain high levels of mercury and should be avoided:

- Shark
- Swordfish
- King mackerel
- Tilefish

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency recommends, in addition to avoiding the fish listed above, to consume up to 12 ounces (2 average meals) a week of a variety of fish and shellfish that are lower in mercury. Five of the most commonly eaten fish that are low in mercury and can be integrated into a healthy diet are:

- Shrimp
- Canned light tuna
- Salmon
- Pollock
- Catfish

Another commonly eaten fish, albacore ("white") tuna has more mercury than canned light tuna. Therefore, limit your consumption of albacore tuna to 6 ounces per week. Women should also avoid eating any game fish without first checking its safety with their local health department. The following fish are good sources of omega-3 fatty acids and can be part of a healthy diet if consumption is limited to two or three times per week:

- Kippers
- Mackerel
- Sardines
- Pilchards
- Alternatives to Fish Omega 3 fatty acids can be found in non-aquatic sources. Good choices include:
  - Fortified foods
  - Dark green vegetables
  - Canola, sunflower, and flaxseed oils
  - Walnuts
  - Fish-oil supplements

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Cod liver oil is best avoided because of concerns over the possible toxic effects of vitamin A during pregnancy. Your healthcare provider can best help you find a supplement that will best meet your specific needs. For information about the risks of Mercury in Seafood call the U. S. Food and Drug Administration Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition Food Information Line toll-free: 1 (888) SAFEFOOD. For more information you can also visit the FDA's Food Safety Website at [www.cfsan.fda.gov](http://www.cfsan.fda.gov).

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