



FDA Encourages Pregnant Women to Eat No Less Than Two Seafood Meals Each Week

After years of recommending a maximum amount of seafood for pregnant and breastfeeding women, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) have issued new draft advice that—for the first time—strongly endorses fish as an essential food for pregnant and breastfeeding women, as well as children. This advice is based on more than 100 studies, and recommends that the *real* risk of seafood for pregnant and nursing women is not eating enough fish to realize the important health benefits. In fact, the draft advice recommends that expectant and breastfeeding women eat a *minimum* of 8 ounces of fish weekly.

Fish Delivers a Multitude of Health Benefits

- Fish is not merely a part of a healthy diet but a vital staple for the brain development of infants and children. In fact, avoiding or limiting fish during pregnancy deprives babies of essential nutrients, such as omega-3 fatty acids, for proper growth and baby brain and eye development.
- Eating fish increases the amount of essential omega-3s in moms' breast milk. And, during the first three months of life, the DHA content of the brain triples, which is why it is vital for breastfeeding moms to eat fish.
- Omega-3s make up more than half of the fat in a baby's brain and as much as 65 percent of the retina of the eye. Omega-3 fatty acids are not naturally produced in the body; rather, the body relies on the diet to deliver them. Fish is the single best natural source of omega-3s available to Americans.
- Fish contains essential nutrients in addition to omega-3s, which include protein, B vitamins, iron, selenium and vitamin D – a nutrient that is difficult to get from other foods and may also contribute positively to cardiovascular and bone health.

Incorporating More Fish Into Any Diet Can Be Easy

- The new draft guidance from the FDA aligns with the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, which advise pregnant and breastfeeding women to eat at least two to three 4-oz. servings of a variety of fish a week. (A 4-oz. serving is about the size of a deck of cards.) The FDA estimates that pregnant women currently eat less than two ounces of fish a week, which means that most expectant and nursing women need to *quadruple* their intake of seafood every week.
- Eating more fish during pregnancy and while breastfeeding can be as simple as replacing at least two meat or poultry meals each week with fish. For example, chicken quesadillas become canned tuna quesadillas and beef burgers become pouch salmon burgers. And eating a variety of fish—including some that are higher in omega-3 fatty acids like salmon, sardines, trout and albacore tuna—is encouraged.

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- Importantly, the draft advice includes only limited restrictions on commercial fish for pregnant and breastfeeding women. It states that there are four fish to avoid: shark, swordfish, king mackerel and tilefish, all of which make up less than one percent of all fish consumed by Americans.

“ It appears many women may have taken [the FDA 2004] advice too far. FDA’s analysis of the reported seafood consumption of more than 1,000 pregnant women in the United States found that over 20 percent of them had eaten no fish at all in the previous month. Of the women who reported eating fish, 50 percent ate less than two ounces a week, and 75 percent ate less than four ounces per week. That’s a real problem because we now know that there’s a beneficial link between eating fish during pregnancy and children’s growth and development.

– Stephen Ostroff, FDA’s Acting Chief Scientist ”

Resources

- For more information about the health benefits of fish and easy-to follow recipes, visit www.GetRealAboutSeafood.com.
- [Perinatal Nutrition Working Group](#), comprised of top professors of obstetrics, doctors of nutrition and registered dietitians, serve as an evidence-based resource about the role of eating seafood in a healthy pregnancy.
- The draft FDA advice is available [here](#).

Source: Draft guidance, "Fish: What Pregnant Women and Parents Should Know" released on June 10, 2014 from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).