

Foods to Avoid When Breastfeeding: The Great Fish Debate



For years, women avoided eating fish while pregnant or breastfeeding and feeding fish to their young ones due to mercury concerns, but it appears as if the tables have turned. Now, rather than having strict maximum consumption guidelines, in the USA the FDA and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) are now encouraging a minimum amount of fish to be consumed by pregnant women, nursing mothers, and young children each week.

How Much Is Enough?



For pregnant and breastfeeding mums, consuming anywhere from 225-240 grams of low-mercury fish every week will allow these women and their babies to enjoy the many benefits that come from fish, such as omega 3 fatty acids which have neuro-developmental benefits (fish can boost your baby's IQ!). This equates to being 2 to 3 servings of fish a week. Young children should also enjoy 2 to 3 servings of fish a week, though in proportions that are appropriate for their age and their caloric needs.□

What Is Low-Mercury Fish?

The reason why there was initially a cap placed on the amount of fish that pregnant women, breastfeeding mums, and children should consume was because of the levels of mercury that fish could contain (mercury is associated with a number of developmental and health problems in children). The key here is to enjoy only low-mercury fish to limit or completely avoid high mercury fish. Some low mercury fish include:

- Atlantic and Tasmanian salmon
- Rainbow and ocean trout
- Barramundi, bream and snapper
- Blue-eye cod also known as blue-eye trevalla
- Flathead, whiting, and sardines
- Jewfish and redfish
- Hake and hoki
- Mackerel and mullet

What Fish Should Be Avoided?

In Australia, the fish to be limited during pregnancy include:

- Shark (flake)
- Swordfish
- Orange Ruffly
- Marlin

It is also recommended that mums and children limit their white albacore tuna consumption to 170 grams a week.



Does This Mean Sushi Is Safe?

Now comes the question from every pregnant and breastfeeding sushi lover out there – does this mean that it's okay to consume sushi? While sushi may be a staple part of a woman's diet in Japan, the same concerns still exist despite the new encouragement for women to eat fish. The three food-borne pathogens that are of concerns when it comes to raw fish are:

- Toxoplasma
- Listeria monocytogenes
- Salmonella enterica

Each of these can be passed through the bloodstream to a developing fetus or through the milk to a nursing baby, so before indulging in a much deserved night of “all you can eat” sushi, be sure to pay a visit to your doctor or obstetrician.