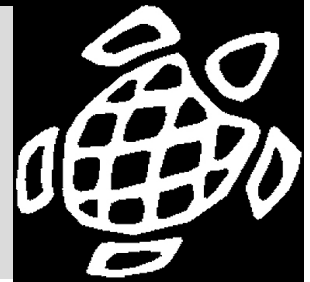


Mercury Dangers:

Mercury, Seafood, Sea Turtles & You



You can gauge your own mercury levels from eating seafood by visiting our easy-to-use mercury calculator at: www.gotmercury.org

630,000 or 15% of newborns born in the US are at risk each year from neurological defects due to mercury contamination.

Environmental Protection Agency, February 2004

Pregnant women and women of childbearing age should not eat shark, swordfish, king mackerel, or tilefish because they contain high levels of mercury.

US Food and Drug Administration, March 2004

Industrial longline-caught albacore tuna contains on average three times as much mercury as chunk light and troll-caught tuna.

US FDA Fish sampling data 2001, 2002 & 2003

Mercury Contamination

Mercury contamination of seafood is a persistent public health threat that poses a significant risk to children and women of child-bearing age. While some mercury is naturally occurring in the environment, activities such as coal-fired power generation, municipal trash incinerators and some chlorine production facilities, have redistributed mercury throughout our global environment.

Public Health Advisories

According to the US Food and Drug Administration (March 19, 2004) women of reproductive age **should not consume any swordfish, shark, tilefish of king mackerel** because they contain levels of methyl mercury deemed unsafe for consumption.

The FDA's March 2004 advisory advises women that it is safe to eat 12 ounces of fish including 6 ounces of albacore tuna each week despite their own data showing albacore to be significantly high in mercury. **Recent FDA data shows albacore tuna to be 300% higher in mercury than chunk light tuna.** A recent FDA study found that 15% or some 630,000 babies are born in the United States each year with dangerous levels of mercury in their bodies.

To calculate your mercury exposure you can visit www.gotmercury.org. This online tool allows you to easily determine if you are ingesting too much mercury from eating seafood.

The Swordfish, Sea Turtles, Mercury Connection

In addition to the health impacts of swordfish consumption, eating this fish (and others caught using longlines) also puts marine species at risk. The industrial longline fishing operations that catch swordfish and tuna are also catching, killing and discarding millions of marine mammals, sea turtles, sharks and seabirds every year. **All seven species of sea turtles are internationally recognized as endangered or threatened-** yet the killing of these ancient, majestic animals continues. **By removing swordfish from your dinner plate, you will protect sea turtles and your health as well.**

The Sea Turtle Restoration Project is seeking a United Nations moratorium on pelagic longline and gillnet fishing in the Pacific that harms or kills sea turtles and other endangered species. By halting the use of these types of indiscriminating fishing techniques, we can help save the lives of thousands of non-targeted species and improve the overall health of fish stocks and our oceans.

SEA TURTLE RESTORATION PROJECT

(A Project of Turtle Island Restoration Network)
PO Box 400, Forest Knolls, CA 94933 (415) 488-0370
Email: info@seaturtles.org
www.seaturtles.org
www.gotmercury.org



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The term "Mad as a Hatter" was coined to describe the symptoms that felt hat manufacturing workers contracted as a result of contact with mercury.

Low level mercury poisoning from eating mercury-contaminated seafood can include:

- Hair loss
- Memory loss
- Mental instability
- Numbness or burning in extremities
- Learning disabilities
- Central nervous system damage
- Reduced motor skills
- Psychological effects, including depression

Consumption of fish is the dominant pathway of exposure to methylmercury for fish consuming humans.

USEPA, December 1997

More Facts about Mercury

Mercury accumulates in the human liver, kidney, brain, and blood and can harm a child's developing nervous system even at relatively low levels. Health effects include birth defects, impaired motor skills and other developmental disabilities. At higher levels, mercury can also cause kidney failure, cardiovascular collapse and genetic damage in both children and adults.

Airborne mercury from coal and oil-fired power plants finds its way into the oceans through direct deposition and through rainwater runoff. Through a process known as bioaccumulation, the concentration of mercury is highest in species at the top of the food chain. Larger, longer-lived, top-of-the-food-chain marine species have the highest levels of mercury in their tissue and pose the greatest risk for pregnant mothers, children and women of child-bearing age.

While humans are exposed to mercury through skin contact and inhalation, the primary exposure pathways for humans is through direct ingestion of mercury-contaminated seafood.

Minamata Disease

Mercury contamination of seafood jumped into the public consciousness in the 1950's with the outbreak of "Minamata Disease" in a small fishing village in Japan. Residents of Minamata began developing health abnormalities including severe birth defects, dizziness, slurred speech and a decrease in basic motor skills, which occurred in over 3000 residents. Public health officials determined the outbreak was attributable to the high consumption of seafood from Minamata Bay, which was heavily contaminated by the direct dumping of mercury from the Chisso Corporation, a chemical manufacturing plant. In all, 46 people died from the outbreak.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Do not eat swordfish! Longlines used to catch swordfish are pushing sea turtles to the brink of extinction.

Gauge your own mercury levels. To determine if you are exceeding the safe level of mercury from eating seafood, you can visit:
www.gotmercury.org

Ask your grocer why there are no mercury warning signs where mercury-contaminated fish are sold.

Write letters to the editor and help bring this issue into the spotlight of your community.

Choose seafood species that are healthy for you and sustainable for the oceans.

To get more information that combines both ocean conservation and human health information contact :

- The Institute for Agricultural Trade Policy at:
www.iatp.org/foodandhealth
- Environmental Defense's seafood selector at:
www.environmentaldefense.org

Join the Sea Turtle Restoration Project in our efforts to alert the public about the dangers of swordfish consumption. Contact us for more information and/or to become a member at: 415-488-0370, or visit:
www.seaturtles.org