Once is Good, Twice is Better

Eating fish is good for the heart. Studies show that eating fish at least twice a week reduces the risk of heart disease by 25% to 30%.

In addition, regular fish consumption could help reduce the incidence of brain tumors and other types of cancer.

Benefits of Fish Consumption

Fish is a good source of omega-3 fatty acids, protein, vitamin D and selenium (antioxidant), while being generally low in fat and saturated fat.

Eating fish helps reduce the risk of heart disease. It is also good for the development of fetuses and children. Canada’s Food Guide recommends eating at least two servings of fish per week.

Fatty Acids in the Fish of Gros-Mécatina

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
<th>Recommended daily value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Landlocked salmon</td>
<td>149%</td>
<td>970 mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arctic char</td>
<td>111%</td>
<td>725 mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brook trout</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>550 mg</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Per 230-g meal

Like vitamins, omega-3 fatty acids are essential nutrients that the human body needs but cannot create on its own. This means that our source of omega-3 is our food. Fish is one of the richest sources of omega-3 fatty acids.

Did You Know?

Tree clearing has very little impact on the mercury levels in reservoir fish since the trunks and branches of submerged trees do not really decompose.

What does decompose is the newly emerged vegetation, such as the groundcover, plants, leaves and mosses. During this decomposition, part of the mercury contained in the vegetation enters the food chain and accumulates up to the fish.

Always Remember

The mercury levels in the water of rivers, lakes or reservoirs are always very low. However, public health authorities recommend not drinking water that comes directly from Quebec’s rivers, lakes or reservoirs. This is not because of mercury, but because of the bacteria that may be present in the water.

As Time Goes by...

Monitoring of fish mercury levels in reservoirs elsewhere in Quebec has shown that mercury levels in non- predatory fish return to the same levels as those in natural lakes after 10 to 20 years.

In predatory fish, which feed on other fish, this return takes longer (20 to 35 years).

Mercury and Fish

All fish naturally contain a small amount of mercury. The creation of new bodies of water, such as reservoirs, causes an increase in the level of mercury in fish.

This phenomenon is temporary; fish mercury levels return to natural levels after several years.

Consumption guidelines for fish from the region

If you eat fish caught in the region, this guide will help you enjoy the health benefits of fish while avoiding the mercury-related effects.

For adults

This consumption guide recommends the maximum number of meals per month considered safe by the Centre intégré de santé et de services sociaux de la Côte-Nord. The recommended number of meals will remain valid for several years.

Pregnant women, women intending to become pregnant, and children under 13 years of age

If you are pregnant or breastfeeding, this food you eat nourishes your baby. The healthy fat (omega-3) contained in fish is good for the development of your baby’s brain and eyes.

Public health authorities in Quebec recommend that women who are pregnant, breastfeeding or likely to become pregnant, and children under 13 years of age eat at least two meals per week of low mercury fish, which is identified by a green dot in this guide (maximum of six 230-g meals per month).

For fish identified by a dot other than green, the consumption guidelines should be halved. For example, the recommendation made for brook trout caught in the Robertson reservoir is four meals per month.

The recommended maximum for a pregnant woman would therefore be only two meals per month for this species.

Mercury and fish consumption in Quebec’s waters

The mercury content in the water of Quebec’s rivers, lakes or reservoirs is considered safe by the Centre intégré de santé et de services sociaux de la Côte-Nord recorded in this guide will help you enjoy the health benefits of fish while avoiding the mercury-related effects.

Conclusions

The consumption of fish is safe for the development of fetuses and children. Canada’s Food Guide recommends eating at least two servings of fish per week.
Fish: How to Eat It Safely

Fish is rich in protein, vitamins D and healthy fats, such as omega-3. However, fish populations are negatively impacted by global environmental changes. The Centre intégré de santé et de services sociaux de la Côte-Nord invites fish consumers to follow the recommendations in this guide. By doing so, consumers can benefit from the nutritional value of fish, while taking steps to avoid the increase in fish mercury levels that follows the fishing of adults. The number of meals recommended per month is specified on the map for each species and fishing area.

Precautions for Pregnant Women and Children

Women who are pregnant, breastfeeding or likely to become pregnant, and children under 15 years of age should not eat the species identified by a green dot on the map (maximum of 6 meals of 150 g per month).

The best option for pregnant women and children is to consume fish from mature marine habitats. These fish have lower mercury contents and can be consumed without restriction.

**Fish Consumption Guide**

**Based on the World Health Organization guidelines.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MERCURY CONTENT</th>
<th>MAXIMUM NUMBER OF MEALS PER MONTH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.00 to 0.29</td>
<td>Unlimited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.30 to 0.49</td>
<td>8 meals per month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.50 to 0.99</td>
<td>4 meals per month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.00 to 1.49</td>
<td>2 meals per month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.50 to 1.99</td>
<td>1 meal per month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.00 to 3.00</td>
<td>0 meals per month</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Fish: How to Eat It Safely**

The maximum number of meals recommended for fish of each color category cannot be added. For example, you could eat 2 meals of dark orange-colored spices or 3 meals of orange-colored species per month, but not the sum of both. A meal is considered equivalent to 210 g (9 oz) of fish flesh, before cooking.

Since mercury levels increase with fish length, the number of meals per month should be reduced by half if the carcasses are significantly larger than the values indicated.

The reverse is also true if the carcasses are significantly smaller than the lengths provided on the map.

It is not dangerous to eat fish every day for short periods of time (e.g., during fishing trips) given that it takes several months for the body to accumulate a substantial quantity of mercury. It is therefore acceptable to exceed the monthly consumption recommendations, but not a short period of time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Catch Record</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>86.14 kg (190 lb) caught in 1986 in the Saguenay area.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lamps</th>
<th>Women, cow, pieces of both (head, back, pectoral, etc.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Fish: How to Eat It Safely**

- Avoid eating fish that are larger than the lengths provided on the map. The reverse is also true if the catches are significantly smaller than the lengths provided on the map.

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