

# Warning Consumers About Mercury in Fish

## Wild Oats and Point of Sale Advisories

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**Oceana**



# Who is Oceana?

- Founded in 2001
- Campaign Driven – 3 Campaigns
- Approx. 70 Full-Time Staff
- Washington, DC –HQ
  - European Oceans, Madrid, Spain
  - South American Oceans, Santiago, Chile
  - Other Offices
    - Brussels
    - Monterey, CA
    - Los Angeles, CA
    - Juneau, AK
    - Portland, OR
    - New York, NY



# Campaign to Stop Seafood Contamination



# 66% of the Public is Unaware



**MERCURY IN SEAFOOD**  
[ SHOPPERS HAVE A RIGHT TO KNOW ]

**STOP SEAFOOD CONTAMINATION**

**OCEANA** | Preventing The World's Oceans

Mercury has made its way onto our dinner plates without our even knowing it. Largely because of polluting power plants, chlorine factories and other industries, mercury has infiltrated our rivers, lakes, and oceans. Consequently, many of the fish we commonly eat – like tuna and swordfish – contain such high concentrations of mercury that the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) consider them unsafe to eat on a frequent basis. According to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the primary source of mercury exposure in humans is through seafood consumption. In 2003, forty-five U.S. states issued mercury advisories for recreationally caught fish.

Mercury is a dangerous poison. Exposure to high concentrations has been linked to memory loss, fatigue, impaired coordination and other neurological damage. Mercury accumulates in the bloodstream over time and can remain in one's body for a year or more.

Children and unborn babies are especially at risk since they can be adversely affected by much lower levels of mercury than adults. Mercury can be passed on from a pregnant mother to her developing baby. In fact, a scientist with the EPA estimates that one in every six American women has enough mercury in her blood to run the risk of neurological damage to her developing child.

Women who are, or may become, pregnant, as well as children, should take special care to avoid fish with high mercury levels. In fact, the FDA and the EPA have warned women of child-bearing age and children not to eat swordfish, shark, king mackerel or tilefish, and to limit their consumption of all other fish to 12 ounces (about two average meals) a week, including no more than six ounces of albacore tuna or tuna steaks.

Unfortunately, neither of these agencies has done an adequate job of informing the public about their own advisories. Consumers are largely unaware of the FDA's warnings, and with the exception of those in California, grocery stores are not required to inform customers about the dangers of mercury contamination in seafood. As a result, consumers could be putting themselves and their families at risk.

# WILD OATS

A leading national natural, organic and specialty foods retailer

113 stores in 24 states and British Columbia, Canada

Two distinct formats: natural foods grocer and farmers market stores

8500 employees

More than \$1.1 billion in annual sales

Built on a foundation of a strong social mission

Provider of the highest quality products available that meet our quality standards with an emphasis on all-natural and organic





# CONSUMER ADVISORY

Nearly all fish and seafood contain some amount of mercury and related compounds. Certain fish contain higher levels than others. Mercury and related compounds are chemicals known to cause cancer and birth defects or other reproductive harm. Some farm-raised salmon contain PCBs in higher concentration than wild-caught salmon. PCBs have potentially been linked to cancer.

Pregnant and nursing women, women who may become pregnant, and young children **SHOULD NOT EAT** the following fish, which contain higher levels of mercury than others:

## **SWORDFISH • SHARK • KING MACKEREL • TILEFISH**

They should also limit their consumption of other fish, including fresh, frozen and canned albacore (white) tuna, and certain farm-raised salmon.

Fish and seafood can be an important source of nutrients and an important part of a balanced diet. However, the federal Food and Drug Administration advises pregnant and nursing women and women who may become pregnant to eat a variety of seafood and limit their consumption of fish to no more than 12 ounces per week.

Fish that tend to have little or no mercury include salmon (fresh, frozen or canned), shrimp and scallops. Chunk or chunk light tuna has less mercury than solid white, chunk white or albacore tuna. Some farm-raised salmon contains PCBs, although below levels considered by the FDA to be unsafe.

### **The following steps may help reduce mercury exposure:**

- **Eat a variety of different types of fish;**
- **Eat smaller fish rather than older, larger fish;**
- **Begin following these guidelines at least one year before becoming pregnant.**

For more information, consult the following websites:

U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) [www.cfsan.fda.gov/seafood1.html](http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/seafood1.html)

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency [www.epa.gov/mercury](http://www.epa.gov/mercury)

California Department of Health Services

[www.dhs.ca.gov/ps/deodc/ehib/ehib2/topics/mercury\\_in\\_fish.html](http://www.dhs.ca.gov/ps/deodc/ehib/ehib2/topics/mercury_in_fish.html)

or call the FDA toll-free at 1-888-SAFEFOOD (1-888-728-3366).

# WILD OATS

## Wild Oats and Consumer Education – Mercury Contamination

Wild Oats was the first national retailer to voluntarily post consumer advisory signs regarding mercury contamination in all of our seafood departments nationwide

Research showed that most people – particularly risk groups – were unaware of mercury contamination and its potential threats



# WILD OATS

The economic impact on these species was non-existent. In fact, because of marketing efforts, sales of seafood overall increased after the signs were posted.

It was not about an economic decision, it was about further strengthening our relationship of trust with our customers.

Customers applauded Wild Oats for providing them with the information to make informed choices.





# SAFEWAY

**VONS**

Ingredients for life.™

**SAFEWAY**  
Ingredients for life.™

**PAVILIONS**

**Dominick's**

**CARRS**  
**SAFEWAY**  
Ingredients for life.™

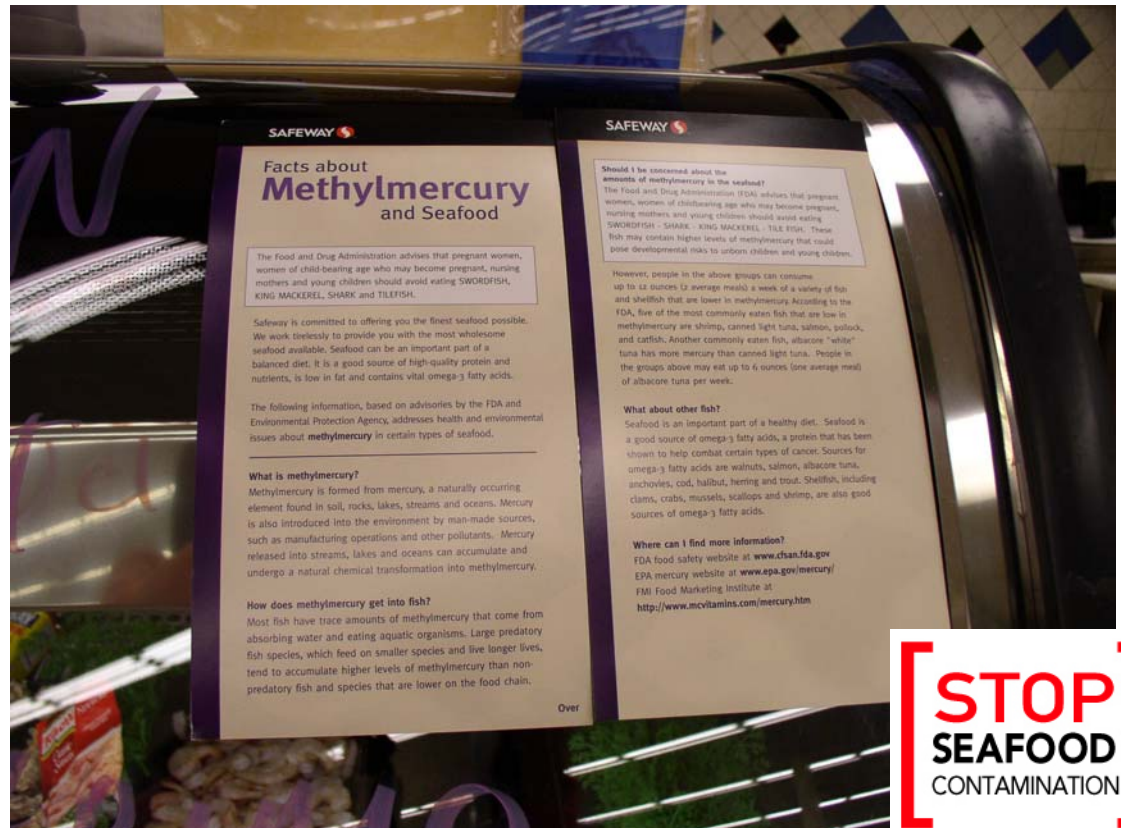
**Randalls**

Ingredients for life..

**GENUARDI'S**  
Ingredients for life..

**Tom Thumb**

Ingredients for life..



SAFEWAY

## Facts about Methylmercury and Seafood

The Food and Drug Administration advises that pregnant women, women of child-bearing age who may become pregnant, nursing mothers and young children should avoid eating SWORDFISH, KING MACKEREL, SHARK and TILAPIA.

SafeWay is committed to offering you the finest seafood possible. We work tirelessly to provide you with the most wholesome seafood available. Seafood can be an important part of a balanced diet. It is a good source of high-quality protein and nutrients, is low in fat and contains vital omega-3 fatty acids.

The following information, based on advisories by the FDA and Environmental Protection Agency, addresses health and environmental issues about methylmercury in certain types of seafood.

### What is methylmercury?

Methylmercury is formed from mercury, a naturally occurring element found in soil, rocks, lakes, streams and oceans. Mercury is also introduced into the environment by man-made sources, such as manufacturing operations and other pollutants. Mercury released into streams, lakes and oceans can accumulate and undergo a natural chemical transformation into methylmercury.

### How does methylmercury get into fish?

Most fish have trace amounts of methylmercury that come from absorbing water and eating aquatic organisms. Large predatory fish species, which feed on smaller species and live longer lives, tend to accumulate higher levels of methylmercury than non-predatory fish and species that are lower on the food chain.

Over

SAFEWAY

### Should I be concerned about the amounts of methylmercury in the seafood?

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) advises that pregnant women, women of childbearing age who may become pregnant, nursing mothers and young children should avoid eating SWORDFISH - SHARK - KING MACKEREL - TILAPIA. These fish may contain higher levels of methylmercury that could pose developmental risks to unborn children and young children.

However, people in the above groups can consume up to 12 ounces (2 average meals) a week of a variety of fish and shellfish that are lower in methylmercury. According to the FDA, five of the most commonly eaten fish that are low in methylmercury are shrimp, canned light tuna, salmon, pollock, and catfish. Another commonly eaten fish, albacore "white" tuna has more mercury than canned light tuna. People in the groups above may eat up to 6 ounces (one average meal) of albacore tuna per week.

### What about other fish?

Seafood is an important part of a healthy diet. Seafood is a good source of omega-3 fatty acids, a protein that has been shown to help combat certain types of cancer. Sources for omega-3 fatty acids are walnuts, salmon, albacore tuna, anchovies, cod, halibut, herring and trout. Shellfish, including clams, crabs, mussels, scallops and shrimp, are also good sources of omega-3 fatty acids.

### Where can I find more information?

FDA food safety website at [www.cfsan.fda.gov](http://www.cfsan.fda.gov)  
EPA mercury website at [www.epa.gov/mercury/](http://www.epa.gov/mercury/)  
FMI Food Marketing Institute at <http://www.mcvitalins.com/mercury.htm>

**STOP**  
**SEAFOOD**  
CONTAMINATION



# The “Green List”

## TAKE ACTION

Get your store on the Green List. The stores that are currently on the Green List have shown that they care enough about their customers' health to hang signs like the one below about the FDA advisory on mercury in seafood.

## [GREEN LIST]

A GUIDE TO GROCERY STORES

### WHAT IS THE GREEN LIST?

Customers have the right to know which fish are high in mercury. Oceana has asked grocery stores to post signs with the FDA advice for mercury at the seafood counters. Several stores have responded and have taken action to educate their customers. These stores have made the Green List. Companies on the Red List have received requests from Oceana to hang signs about the FDA advice but have refused to do so.

### WHY DO WE NEED A LIST?

The FDA has said that women of child-bearing age and children should not eat shark, swordfish, king mackerel and tilapia, and should limit consumption of albacore tuna and tuna steaks to 6 oz a week, yet many people are not aware of this advice. Posting signs where people buy fish would help consumers make informed decisions about what to eat and feed their families.

## [GREEN LIST]

Carrs  
 Dominick's  
 Genuardi's  
 Pak 'n' Save Foods  
 Pavillions  
 Randall's  
 Safeway  
 Tom Thumb  
 Vons  
 Wild Oats



## [RED LIST]

A&P	Kassal Food Markets
Acme	King Soopers
Albertsons	Kroger
American Store Company	Max Foods
Baker's Bristol Farms	Neighborhood Market
Cole Foods/Bell Markets	Owen's
City Market	Pathmark
Costco	Pay Less
Dillons	Price Chopper
Farmer Jack	Public
Food 4 Less	OFC Quality Food Centre
Food Basics	Ralphs
Food Lion Foods Co.	Sam's Club
Fred Meyer	Sev's Center
Fry's Marketplace	Sev'sRite
Fry's	Shaw's
Gerbes	ShopRite
Giant	Smith's
Eagle Giant-Collis (operates under Giant and Martins)	Star Market
Grocery Warehouse	Stop & Shop
Hannaford's	Super Fresh
Harveys	Super Sever
Hiander	Sweet Bay
Hy-Vee	The Food Emporium
IGA Ingles	Thriftway (but not all - not Thriftway of WA or Thriftway/ShopNBag)
Jay C	Top's Markets
Jewel-Osco	Trader Joe's
Kash 'n' Harry	Waldburn's
	Wal-Mart
	Wagmans
	Whole Foods
	Winn-Dixie

