

# HealthLink

Linking Health and the Environment

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## Our Mission:

To protect and improve public health by reducing and eliminating pollutants and toxic substances from our environment through research, education, and community action.

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Food and Drug Administration  
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Email: [fdadockets@oc.fda.gov](mailto:fdadockets@oc.fda.gov)

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Att'n: Docket #2004D-0028

Dear Food and Drug Administration:

As you may have learned from recent news reports, Americans may be consuming dangerous levels of mercury in certain types of fish, the most common being swordfish and tuna. Eating mercury-contaminated fish exposes us to this toxic chemical that affects the nervous system.

Mercury exposure is particularly dangerous for pregnant women and young children because infants' and children's developing brains are highly sensitive to its effects, including learning disabilities, attention deficit disorders, mental retardation and other neurological and developmental problems.

The Food and Drug Administration recently proposed an advisory for mercury-contaminated fish, but its "advice" fails to provide useful information to consumers. The proposed warning just instructs people to eat "a variety" of fish each week, without naming the most contaminated fish or telling us how much canned tuna we can safely eat ourselves or feed to our families. For example, the FDA advises that children should eat less than 12 ounces of fish per week, but does not indicate how much less. When you consider that a 22-pound toddler who eats only two ounces of albacore tuna a week would ingest nearly three times the Environmental Protection Agency's safe level of mercury while an 88-pound child who eats six ounces would be at twice the EPA's safe level, the FDA's advice really does not effectively help us protect ourselves from mercury-contaminated fish.

In order to effectively safeguard children from mercury poisoning and its effects, it is critical to educate their parents and caregivers on precisely which fish are likely to contain high levels of mercury and which fish can be eaten safely each week. Without this information the advisory does not adequately educate consumers and does not safeguard children from the toxic effects of mercury.

Sincerely,

Martha Dansdill  
On Behalf of HealthLink

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