

**PENNY SAVER NEWS**

FAX: 932-5261

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BY: Mary A. Keith, Ph.D., L.D.  
Food, Nutrition and Health Agent**HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY**

5339 S. County Road 579

Seffner, FL 33584-3334

PH:(813)744-5519 x 136, FAX:744-5776  
e-mail:mkeith@ufl.edu**Something Fishy Is Good for Us**

One set of recommendations says to eat more fish, for our heart health, while another set warns us against them because of the potential contamination levels. What are we supposed to do?! Most nutritionists and medical experts over the years keep coming down on the same side of the discussion. Fish is good for us, and some kinds are better than others! It is also true that there are a few kinds that are not so good for us too, and less is better.

Let's start with the good side of fish. In general fish is a good quality, low fat protein source. When we're looking to lower the fat content of our diet, fish is a good choice - as long as you're not frying it! In addition, some kinds of fish have certain kinds of fat that are very, very helpful. In oily fish, especially salmon, tuna, sardines, herring, trout and mackerel, some of the fats are omega-3s. That just means they have a kink near one end. But having that special shape means they do our hearts a lot of good. People who eat these fish twice a week on average have a third less risk of dying from heart disease. That's a pretty big benefit!

Beyond helping our hearts, it's starting to look like these fish, and the special oils they have, can also help protect us from Alzheimer's disease and depression, two conditions of the brain, as well as maybe keep us from getting diabetes and possibly even some kinds of cancer. If you eat enough of them, they'll help protect your heart even more by lowering your triglyceride level. That's a kind of fat that floats around in

your blood. The same high doses help ease the symptoms of arthritis and inflammatory bowel disease.

The omega-3 fats in fish are called EPA and DHA. There are other omega-3 fats, like the kind in flax seed and walnuts, but they don't protect your heart the way fish oils do. To get enough EPA and DHA for at least some protection, you need to eat two servings of fatty fish a week. If you get up to 5 or 6 servings of fatty fish a week you'll start getting the triglyceride protection too.

What about the dangers that worry some people? Some kinds of fish do carry methyl mercury. Some carry dioxin and PCB compounds. How do we avoid them?

Methyl mercury is in high levels only in 4 kinds of fish. If we eat little or no swordfish, shark, king mackerel and tilefish (golden bass), we can avoid most of it. Women who are pregnant or breastfeeding should not eat these fish, but they should be eating some fish. Those EPA and DHA fats are very helpful for the baby's brain develop completely. Infants should not be given these fish either, but small children can have tuna and the good other fish.

The rest of us can eat those fish without danger as long as we don't eat more than five servings of them a week. The best way to avoid possible problems and keep on eating fish is to eat a lot of different kinds. If we only eat one kind all the time, we'll keep getting more of whatever contamination it might have. But if we eat a variety then we don't get a lot from any one. Eating canned fish helps lower our risk too, since the smaller fish end up in the can, and they had less time to become contaminated.

If you get the fish you eat from the store, you don't need to worry about the PCB and dioxins. In commercial fish the levels of these contaminants is very, very low. If

you are out enjoying the sun and catching your own fish, it would be a good idea to check with the Heath Department at 850-245-4299 to see if fish from your area are safe or if there's a safe limit to how many you should eat.

If you're tired of plain old tuna salad sandwiches or want to skip the mayo, here's a different way to have tuna with an Italian flavor. If you can't find pine nuts use sunflower seeds, or even chopped pecans. Add a big tomato salad and dinner's ready!

#### Italian Tuna Wraps

1 tsp prepared Pesto sauce	1/4 cup plain, fat free or low fat yogurt
1 6 oz can solid pack tuna	1 Tbsp pine nuts
2 tsp grated Parmesan cheese	2 tsp fresh chopped basil leaves
2 - 6 inch spinach flavored flour tortillas	leaves of fresh lettuce or greens

Spread nuts in a dry frying pan and toast over medium heat, shaking often, until they start to smell fragrant. Set aside to cool. Mix pesto, yogurt and drained tuna. Stir in chopped basil, toasted nuts and cheese. Lay the lettuce or greens in a single layer on the tortillas. Divide the tuna mixture between them, the roll the tortillas. Serves 2.

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