

Why Fish Oil is NOT the Best Omega-3 Source

Callum Roberts, professor of marine conservation at York University, predicts that by 2050 half the world population will have to go without fish; all that will be left for them may be “jellyfish and slime”.

Ninety years of industrial-scale exploitation of fish has led to an ecological meltdown, and whole biological food chains have been destroyed.

North Atlantic fish stocks have been in decline for well over a century. Fish catch records from the 1920's onwards show that, despite the enormous improvements in technology, catches of the great Atlantic species have remained constant or slowly declined.

Why has the international community failed so badly in its attempts to stop this long-heralded disaster?

“Quite simply,” Roberts says, “agreements and deals brokered by politicians will never be satisfactory. They always look for the short-term fix.” Quotas for fishing fleets are on average 15 to 30 percent higher than those recommended as safe by scientists. And often, for less threatened species, the quotas are set 100 percent higher than the science recommended.

Source: [The Guardian May 11, 2008](#)

Why Should You Be Mindful of Your Fish, and Fish Oil, Intake?

The average American diet is seriously deficient in the essential Omega 3's, [DHA and EPA](#). Except for certain types of fish, there are very few sources of these vitally important fats.

Unfortunately, as this well-written article in the Guardian spells out quite succinctly, fish supplies around the world are becoming scarcer each year. Even I see it, every year that I go to Maui the fish are becoming far less abundant. And, add to that the fact that much of the available fish, are grossly contaminated.

Additionally, eating fish before maturity (meaning it has not had time to reproduce) spells disaster for the ecology. Eating fish that is loaded with toxins spells disaster for your health, completely counteracting any of its inherent benefits.

These are both good reasons for limiting your fish intake, and being mindful of the types of fish you do consume.

The World's Most Perfect Food – Not so Perfect Anymore

The world's oceans are so polluted with industrial waste that most commercially available fish have become little more than carriers of toxins – especially mercury – which accumulates throughout the fat and tissues of their bodies. This isn't surprising, considering some **40 tons** of mercury are released in the United States alone, **every year**, due to burning coal to generate electricity.

The most common contaminants found in fish include:

- [Mercury](#)
- [PCBs](#)
- Radioactive substances like strontium

- Toxic metals such as cadmium, [lead](#), chromium and [arsenic](#)

Smaller fish, such as herring, sardines, and anchovies fare better than larger fish since they don't have time to accumulate much mercury in their tissues.

The highest concentrations are found in the large carnivorous fish of the ocean, such as:

| | |
|---------------|--------------------------|
| Tuna | Canned tuna |
| Sea bass | Oysters (Gulf of Mexico) |
| Marlin | Halibut |
| Pike | Walleye |
| White croaker | Largemouth bass |
| Shark | Swordfish |

[GotMercury.org](#) is a good website if you're curious to see just how high your intake of mercury might be. Not only do they have a handy mercury calculator, but they also perform independent testing on various sources of fish.

You also want to [be especially cautious of canned tuna](#) if you're interested in keeping yourself and your children safe from mercury contamination. Independent testing by the [Mercury Policy Project](#) found that the average mercury concentration in canned tuna is far over the EPA's "safe limits."

For example, they found that:

- A 22 pound toddler who eats just 2 ounces of tuna per week may exceed the EPA's "virtual safe limit" of mercury by 400 percent
- A 132 pound woman who eats 12 ounces of canned tuna per week could also exceed the EPA's limit by 400 percent

Farm-Raised Fish is Much like Factory-Farmed Cattle

Contrary to what industry would like you to believe, farmed fish is NOT a healthier option. Not for you, the fish, nor the environment.

Not only do you still have the problem of mercury, but farm-raised fish also has higher levels of PCBs, another poisonous industrial byproduct. Residues in farm-raised fish can be as much as 9 million times the amount found in the water.

See, in order to be profitable, fish farms must raise large quantities of fish in confined areas, and the overcrowding leads to disease and injuries to the fish. The fish are therefore given antibiotics and chemicals for the parasites like sea lice, skin and gill infections and other diseases that commonly affect them.

Making matters worse, these fish are also given drugs and hormones, and sometimes are [genetically modified](#), to accelerate growth and change reproductive behaviors.

[Farmed salmon](#) are also given the chemicals canthaxanthin and astaxanthin to turn their flesh pink. Wild salmon eat a diet of shrimp and krill, which contain natural chemicals that make the salmon pink. Farm-raised salmon do not eat a natural diet, so their flesh would be gray if they were not given these additives.

Always remember that the food chain matters. You eat what your food ate. [Beef from grass-fed cattle](#),

for example, contains a healthy balance of Omega 3 and omega 6 (about 3:1), whereas corn-fed beef from factory farms has the complete opposite composition, containing far more pro-inflammatory omega 6's than anti-inflammatory Omega 3's (about 20:1!)