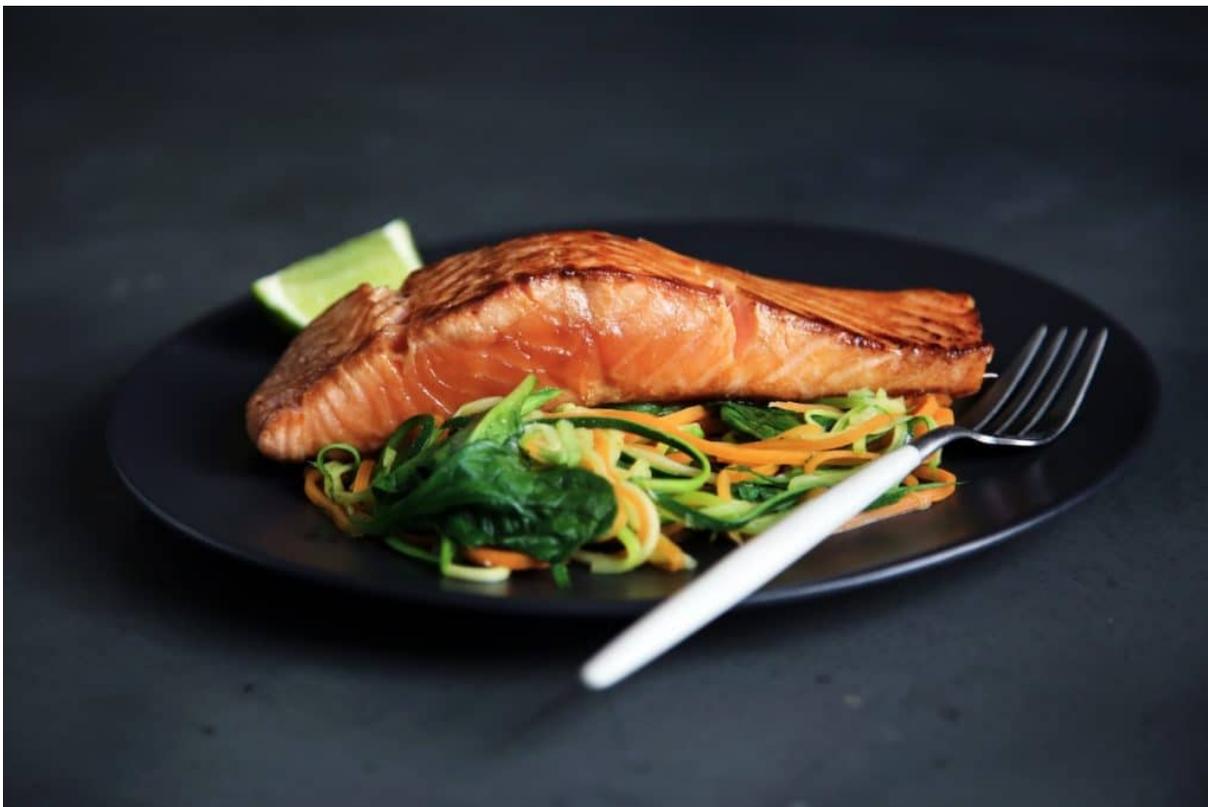


# Fishing for Less Toxic Sources of Omega 3 via SMASH

In Tampa, we eat a lot of seafood, and that's generally a healthy indulgence. After all, many fish are high in omega-3 fatty acids, vitamins D and B2 (riboflavin), and minerals including calcium, phosphorous, iron, zinc, magnesium, and potassium. In many ways, fish high in omega-3 fatty acids are *brain food* – essential nutrients that help the body regulate the brain's structure and function, especially in early development, throughout pregnancy and breast feeding, and during the aging process.



(Photo by [Caroline Attwood](#) from [Unsplash](#))

Omega-3s also have anti-inflammatory properties that may help prevent and treat a host of chronic diseases, including

cardiovascular disease, stroke, and autoimmune conditions. And, they may help to reduce symptoms of metabolic disorders by reducing belly fat, blood pressure, insulin resistance, and high triglycerides. Unfortunately, consuming too much fish can increase your exposure to certain toxins that tend to build up in these underwater creatures, particularly the heavy metal mercury and various fat-soluble pollutants from water pollution.

To reap the health benefits of eating fish while lessening the risks, we recommend you choose wild-caught fish referenced in the **SMASH** acronym below:

- **S**almon
- **M**ackerel
- **A**nchovies
- **S**ardines
- **H**erring

These species are not only the best choices for omega-3s, but they're also generally less toxic, assuming they're caught in the wild. An added benefit is that they tend to be higher in selenium, which can help the body detox from mercury and other pollutants.

Another tip for reducing your exposure to mercury and other toxins in fish is to eat smaller seafood species that live lower on the food chain, such as anchovies, sardines, and scallops. Further up the food chain, fish are bigger, tend to live longer, and are more predatory; over time, mercury and other toxins tend to accumulate in the fishes' fat tissues. This natural "bioaccumulation" of toxins reduces the health benefits of the omega-3s present in that same fat tissue.

So, while gravitating toward wild-caught SMASH varieties, try to eat less of fish species that live higher on the food chain, such as the following:

- King mackerel
- Marlin
- Orange roughy
- Shark
- Swordfish
- Tilefish
- Tuna, especially Ahi, Bigeye, and Albacore

In fact, the U.S. National Resources Defense Council (NRDC) recommends that children younger than six years and women who are pregnant or nursing or who plan to become pregnant within a year avoid eating these specific varieties. The NRDC cites tuna as the most common source of mercury exposure and recommends the following:

- For kids older than six years, limit consumption to fewer than two servings a week, and for younger children, limit consumption to four ounces of light tuna per week.
- A 130-pound woman can eat almost two cans of light tuna per week and stay within the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) recommended safe zone for mercury.
- Children should not consume any albacore tuna, and women of childbearing age should eat no more than four ounces per week.
- Popular sushi fish tend to be high on the food chain, so higher in mercury. Women who are pregnant, nursing, or planning to become pregnant in the next year can reduce mercury exposure by avoiding tuna, mackerel, sea bass, and yellowtail in their sushi choices and opting for eel, salmon, and crab.

### ***More health info and tips about mercury***

Mercury poses a potential health risk, but don't panic. Following the dietary precautions in this post regarding seafood goes a long way to keeping your mercury level down while

increasing healthy omega-3s. Here are a few additional precautions and informative facts:

- If you have an old mercury thermometer, get rid of it. You may be able to exchange it for a free digital thermometer or take it to your local tox-drop or pharmacy to have it disposed of properly. Mercury in thermometers is less toxic than the mercury in fish, but inhaling it can cause damage to the lungs, kidney, and brain.
- If a mercury thermometer breaks, sweep up the little liquid balls of mercury, place them in a sealable container, and take the container to your local hazardous waste collection facility. If the mercury gets on carpeting, upholstery, fabric, or other absorbent surfaces, properly dispose of the item. Otherwise, the mercury will continue to evaporate over time and pose a risk.
- Don't have mercury fillings removed or replaced unless they fall out or are coming apart. You're generally better leaving them alone. If they do need to be replaced, gold fillings are safest. Composite or porcelain fillings may contain bisphenol A (BPA), which can disrupt hormones.

### ***Have your mercury level checked***

If you're concerned about mercury toxicity, we encourage you to have your blood mercury level checked. This requires a simple blood draw, which we can do in our [Tampa Functional Medicine](#) office. We will then send the blood sample out to a lab for testing.

At the same time, we can have your blood tested for other toxins that may be placing your health at risk or causing or contributing to current symptoms. Getting tested is always a good idea for heading off potential health issues before they turn into more serious problems.

If we notice levels of toxins in your body that concern us, we can recommend dietary changes and detox therapies to help your body reduce its toxic load and address any health issues that may have developed as a result.

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