



Enjoy seafood, but do so safely

I read about a seafood processor that was shut down because of food safety concerns. We're trying to eat more seafood these days. Should we be doing anything special to avoid foodborne illness?

Eating more seafood is a great choice for a healthful diet, but it's good that you're aware of potential food safety concerns. Outbreaks associated with seafood have been caused by a variety of bugs, including norovirus, salmonella, vibrio and others. And recently, two seafood processors, one in New York City and another in Seattle, were shut down because of concerns over listeria monocytogenes.

Listeria monocytogenes and other pathogens commonly associated with seafood are killed with proper cooking. But listeria is often associated with ready-to-eat foods such as deli meats, hot dogs, soft cheeses, sprouts, raw milk, and yes, smoked seafood.

Listeria primarily affects older adults, pregnant women, newborns, and adults with weakened immune systems. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, about 20 percent of listeria cases are fatal, making it the third-leading cause of death from food poisoning.

To reduce your risk from seafood-related foodborne illness, the Food and Drug Administration offers a

great primer, "Fresh and Frozen Seafood: Selecting and Serving it Safely," at <http://1.usa.gov/FDAfish>. Tips include:

- Most seafood should be cooked to an internal temperature of 145 degrees F. Fish should be opaque and separate easily with a fork; shrimp and lobster will become pearly and opaque.

- Fresh fish should smell fresh and mild, not fishy or sour. Spoiled seafood can have an ammonia odor that becomes stronger after cooking. If you smell such an odor from raw or cooked fish, throw it away.

- Avoid frozen seafood with ice crystals or frost, which indicates it may be old or have been thawed and refrozen.

- Pregnant or breastfeeding women should not eat shark, swordfish, king mackerel or tilefish because they are likely to have higher amounts of methylmercury, which can harm the development of a child's nervous system. They should also limit fish consumption to 12 ounces a week and choose types known to be lower in mercury: shrimp, canned light tuna, salmon, pollock and catfish. Canned albacore (white) tuna is somewhat higher in mercury and should be limited to 6 ounces a week.

Chow Line is a service of Ohio State University's College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences and its outreach and research arms, Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Chow Line, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH, 43210-1043, or filipic.3@osu.edu.



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