

# Women's Health **UPDATE**

## What's Health Wise: More Fish—Or Less?

(NAPSA)—At a time when concerns about mercury in seafood are causing many Americans to eat less fish, experts say not getting enough seafood in the diet may rob you and your family of important health benefits.

The National Women's Health Resource Center (NWHRC) said a comprehensive review found the benefits of the omega-3 fatty acids in fish are substantial.

While there are documented risks to the unborn fetus if pregnant women consume high amounts of mercury in fish, women of child-bearing age can simply replace fish high in mercury with fish low in mercury such as shrimp, salmon, pollock, rainbow trout, catfish and canned light tuna.

"Fish and shellfish are an important part of a healthy diet, but unfortunately, the many benefits of seafood are being discounted by consumers worried about mercury levels in fish," said Amy Niles, president of the NWHRC. "We need to right the balance so that the public will know that fish is a safe and very healthy food and is critical to a balanced and nutritious diet."

Because the body cannot manufacture the omega-3 fatty acids found in fish, people who restrict fish consumption may be putting themselves and their families at a greater risk for heart disease and stroke. A landmark analysis conducted by the Harvard Center for Risk Analysis and published in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* said if pregnant women consume less of the essential omega-3 fatty acids found in fish, the cognitive development of their offspring may be reduced.



**IT'S NO FISH STORY: getting enough seafood in the diet can provide you and your family with important health benefits.**

"Fish are an excellent source of omega-3 fatty acids, which may protect against coronary heart disease and stroke, and are thought to aid in the neurological development of unborn babies," said Joshua Cohen, lead author and senior research associate at the Harvard Center for Risk Analysis. "If that information gets lost in how the public perceives this issue, then people may inappropriately curtail fish consumption and increase their risk for adverse health outcomes."

Studies show that during pregnancy, the omega-3 fatty acids in fish enhance brain and eye development of the fetus, prolong gestation, increase birth weight and reduce the likelihood of premature birth. During childhood, omega-3 fatty acids aid cognitive and visual development. Omega-3 fatty acids are also associated with a slower decline in mental acuity in older people and a smaller chance of developing Alzheimer's disease.

• *The NWHRC is the leading independent health information resource for women.*