

Module 11 Lesson 7

Transcript

Today, let's talk about mercury. Mercury is a concern with clients who love their seafood and for clients who are looking to become or are pregnant. Today, I want to set you up with an understanding of places we find mercury and how we can avoid mercury poisoning. I'll go over what foods and other lifestyle factors may expose a client to mercury, resources to use to keep an eye on mercury levels in fish, and recommendations to give your clients. Let's start with a little client story. I actually had a mom named Sandra come into my office. Her daughter was dealing with seizures. She had been put on a really strict ketosis diet to see if the neurological issues would resolve and had been eating a lot of fish. When I say she was eating a lot of fish, I mean, she was having canned tuna for lunch at least half of the days a week and grilled or broiled fish for dinner pretty much every night.

Sometimes they also eat sushi. Sandra's daughter was tested for mercury at a doctor's visit and was found to have three times the normal levels. Everyone was really worried because mercury can interfere with brain development, particularly in kids under six. Sandra's daughter was eight, but we all know kids at eight are still developing. They came to me to strategize to get the mercury out of their diets while on the keto diet, which we wound up modifying. While it took a couple of months, her levels did return to normal. Okay. So where do we go from here to prevent this from happening to your clients? I don't want you to worry if you have silver fillings in your teeth that are made with mercury. Don't disturb them or make a change unless your dentist tells you that you need to be concerned. If you still have an old fashioned mercury thermometer, I recommend replacing it just to be safe because I mean, that's an easy change to make, right?

You may have also heard that some vaccines have a mercury related compound in them. Most don't, but you can ask for a mercury-free flu shot if you're concerned. There's not enough of this compound in vaccines to cause toxicity. Mostly, you should pay attention to the fish that you're eating and recommending. I'm sure I've said it before, but I'm a huge fan of the NRDC Smart Seafood Buying Guide, which keeps track of the most environmentally ethical and healthy fish to buy and eat. They tell you the cleanest and safest fish to buy and also the degree of mercury in fish that you might be purchasing. I recommend their pocket guide to just about everyone, but you also can look up the latest information on your smartphone so fast, so don't be afraid to do that when you're shopping for fish. The rule of thumb is that the bigger the fish, the higher the mercury content.

So choose smaller fish like sardines, anchovies, clams, haddock and trout. Bigger fish eat smaller fish, which concentrates the mercury. It makes sense. This is a concept all clients can grasp, so it's a really good thing to tell clients just to get them thinking about it. If you're planning to become pregnant or if you're a kiddo under six, I have my clients avoid all fish in the high mercury and highest mercury categories. There are always substitutes. It's not forever either, but it's an easy shift to make during this time period. Most mercury exposure in the US is from tuna. I limit tuna in planning to be pregnant women and pregnant women to 12 ounces a week and four ounces for kids under five. I recommend pulling out the tuna, yellowtail, mackerel and sea bass in sushi orders as well. In the name of sustainability and questionable fishing practices, when I have a client that's really motivated, I recommend buying fish from the US.

If you can buy local, that's even better. Finally, if there's a doubt, I recommend getting mercury levels tested. It can offer peace of mind and help guide good decisions going forward. Now I want to quickly recap the lesson so you feel prepared in helping clients who are concerned about mercury levels. Reduce exposure to mercury by ditching old school thermometers, that's an easy one to make again. Asking for mercury-free vaccines is something you can do as well. And choosing fish wisely. Use and recommend the NRDC Smart Seafood Buying Guide to track the most environmentally ethical and healthy fish to buy and eat. In general, smaller fish have less mercury, that's another easy thing to remember. For women who are pregnant or trying to get pregnant, limit to 12 ounces per week. And for kids under five, stick with five ounces. Thanks for joining me in this lesson and I cannot wait to see you in the next one.