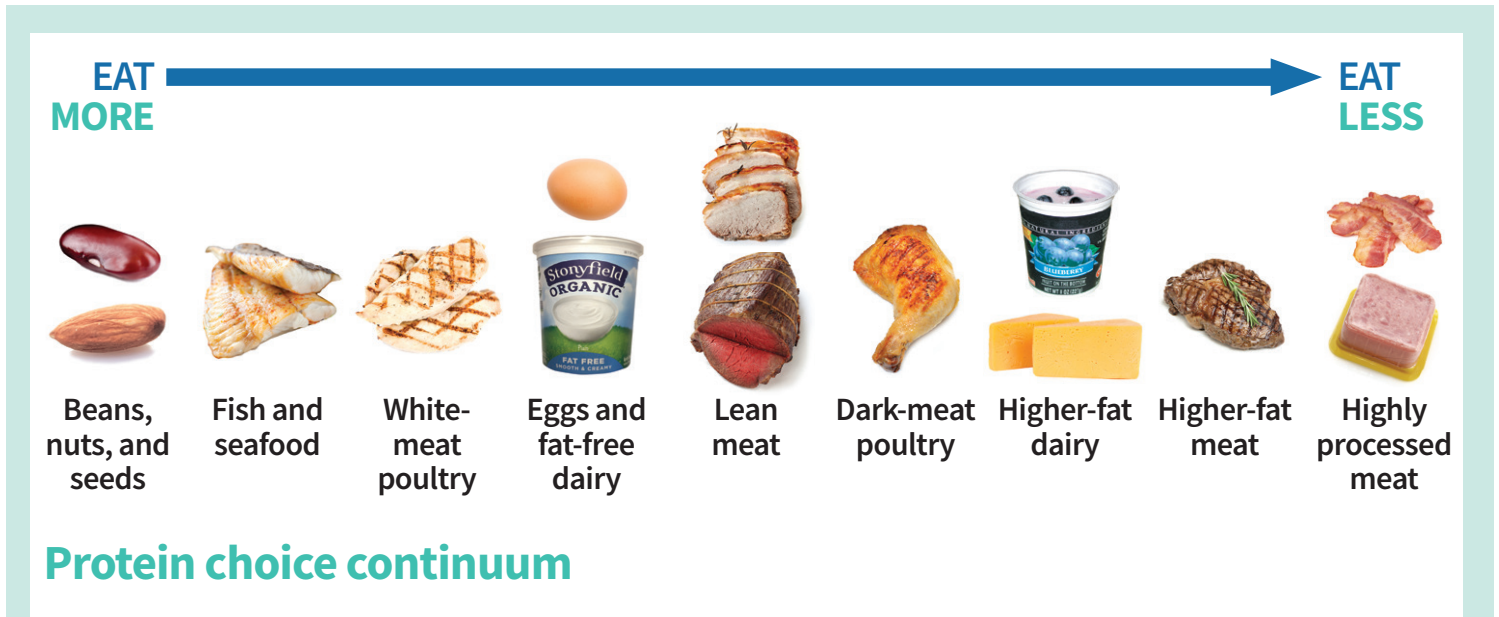


# Change Your Protein

Changing your protein is arguably the most impactful way you can improve your diet. Use the protein choice continuum to take the confusion out of this important Med Way step.



## Protein choice continuum

### Beans, nuts, and seeds

- Eat beans, nuts, and seeds often. Eating more plant proteins is a great way to improve your health.
- Replace some of the meat in your diet with beans, nuts, and seeds often.

### Fish and seafood

- Eat fish and seafood two to three times per week (3–4 ounce servings).
- Make at least one serving a high-fat fish such as salmon.
- Eat fried fish only occasionally.

### White-meat poultry

- Choose white-meat poultry, such as turkey or chicken breast.

### Eggs and fat-free dairy

- Eat eggs up to 7 times per week.
- Choose fat-free dairy products such as fat-free yogurt and milk.

### Lean meat

- Choose lean meat, such as lean or extra lean pork, beef, veal, or lamb. To choose lean cuts, look for “Loin” or “Round” in the name.
- Choose cuts with minimal visible fat (marbling).
- Opt for the lowest percentage of fat when selecting ground meat.
- Ask your grocer or butcher for further assistance with selecting lean and extra lean cuts.

### Dark-meat poultry

- Limit dark-meat poultry such as chicken thighs and legs.

### Higher-fat dairy

- Limit higher-fat dairy products.

### Higher-fat meat

- Limit higher-fat meat cuts from pork, beef, veal, and lamb.
- Choose cuts with minimal visible fat (marbling).
- Opt for the lowest percentage of fat when selecting ground meat.
- Limit consumption of organs, such as liver, to about 3 ounces a month.

### Highly processed meat

- Greatly limit or eliminate highly processed meat such as bacon, sausage, and most deli-meat.

# Fish and Seafood Buying Tips



**Fish doesn't have to break the bank.** Choose items that fit in your food budget (canned, frozen, or fresh), and look for sales where you shop.

**Farm-raised or wild-caught?** No easy answer—there are good and bad versions of each.

Be an informed consumer with these resources:

- [www.seafoodwatch.org](http://www.seafoodwatch.org)
- [www.seafoodhealthfacts.org](http://www.seafoodhealthfacts.org)
- [www.fishwatch.gov](http://www.fishwatch.gov)
- [www.ncseagrant.ncsu.edu/program-areas/education-training/consumer-awareness](http://www.ncseagrant.ncsu.edu/program-areas/education-training/consumer-awareness)

## What about mercury?

Don't let fear of mercury stand between you and eating fish. The most commonly consumed fish and seafood selections in the United States present very little risk from contaminants like mercury while offering many health and nutrition benefits.

## Why do fish have mercury?

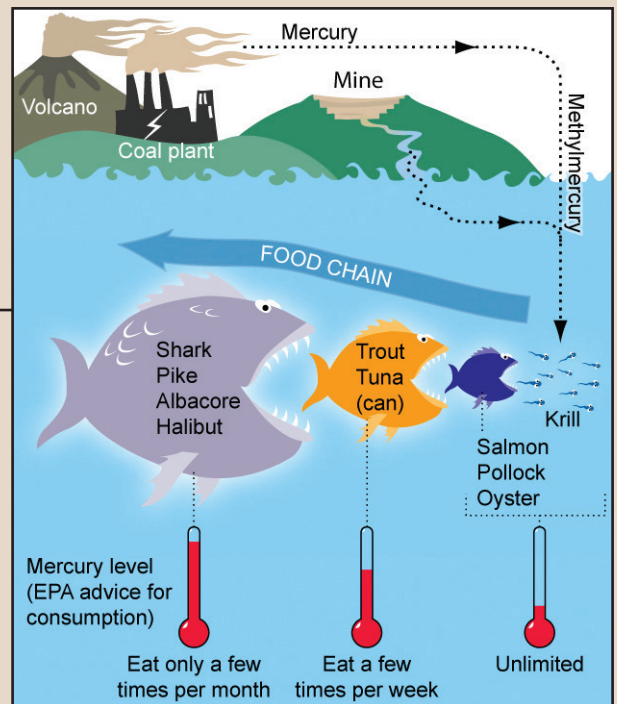
Methylmercury enters the environment and is consumed by small fish, who are consumed by larger fish, who are consumed by even larger fish. This is called bio-accumulation and results in larger fish having larger amounts of mercury.

## Low-mercury fish

- Salmon
- Pollock
- Oysters
- Shrimp
- Catfish
- Clams
- Scallops
- Flounder
- Cod
- Crab
- Crawfish
- Squid
- Anchovies
- Tilapia
- Sardines
- Croaker
- Canned chunk light tuna

## Highest-mercury fish

- King mackerel
- Marlin
- Orange roughy
- Shark
- Swordfish
- Tilefish (Gulf of Mexico)
- Tuna, bigeye
- Local catch from contaminated water



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**Pregnant women and small children should eat a variety of low-mercury fish each week and avoid fish that are high in mercury, raw, or partially cooked.**

For more information, visit <https://www.fda.gov/Food/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/ucm393070.htm>.