

Mercury can be a risk to a person's health when his/her blood mercury level is too high.



Who is at risk?

Even though adults can also be affected, unborn babies and young children are more at risk.



What can you do if you have a high blood mercury level?

Is this pamphlet for you? This pamphlet is for you if a health professional tells you that the mercury level in your blood is too high.

Country foods are excellent for your health and are safe to eat!

MOST country foods contain little or no mercury!



What are the possible effects?

• In unborn babies and young children:

- Premature birth
- Affected development of the brain that can cause subtle difficulties in attention, memory, language, motor skills, etc.

• In adults:

- Increased risk of heart diseases

Where does mercury come from?

Mercury is a metal that can be released in the air by industries located in other parts of the world (ex. coal burning) or from natural sources (thawing of permafrost, flooding of forests to create reservoirs for hydroelectricity, forest fires, etc.). Mercury can travel over long distances and tends to accumulate in Arctic regions.



How can you be exposed?

Mercury can find its way into plants and animals especially the flesh of marine mammals and predatory fish. It can then be ingested by people who eat those animals. Humans may also be exposed to other sources of mercury such as broken compact fluorescent light bulbs, old thermometers and old thermostats.

Country foods are an excellent source of many essential nutrients, such as proteins, omega-3 fatty acids and iron. Certain country foods, such as mattaq, may even have a protective effect against mercury. Activities such as hunting, fishing, trapping and berry picking are part of a healthy and active lifestyle.

Do you have any questions ? Contact the head nurse at your local health clinic.

A health professional tells you that the level of mercury in your blood is high. What can you do?

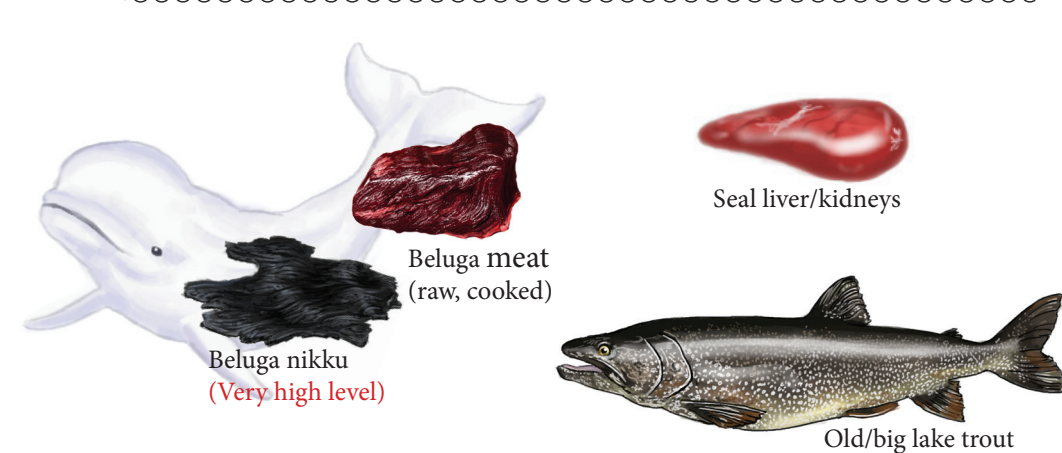
1. Eat as much as possible country foods containing little or no mercury. Most country foods in Nunavik fall under this category.

Country foods containing little or no mercury



2. Only eat country foods with high mercury levels according to the recommended frequency.

Country foods containing high mercury levels¹



If you have a high mercury level in your blood and you are...



A baby² or a child less than 11 years old



- Avoid eating beluga nikku
- Total maximum of 1 time/month³: Beluga meat (raw, cooked), seal liver/kidneys or old/big lake trout

A woman /adolescent who is pregnant⁴ or planning a pregnancy during the year



- Avoid eating beluga nikku
- Total maximum of 2 times/month³: Beluga meat (raw, cooked), seal liver/kidneys or old/big lake trout



Another adult or a child over 12 years old



- Maximum of 2 times/month : Beluga nikku
- Total maximum of 4 times/month³: Beluga meat (raw, cooked), seal liver/kidneys or old/big lake trout



LOW MERCURY LEVEL
Marine mammals: Beluga blubber (misirak) • Seal blubber (misirak) • Walrus blubber, meat, liver and kidneys • Polar bear meat • **Fish:** Arctic Char • Brook trout • Atlantic salmon • Arctic and Atlantic cod • Lake whitefish • Fourhorn sculpin (Ugly fish) • Fish eggs • **Molluscs :** Blue mussels • Clams • Scallops • **Wildfowl :** Willow ptarmigan • Canada & snow geese • Canada goose eggs • Scoter, eider and other ducks • **Mammals :** Caribou meat and nikku • Muskox meat • Snowshoe hare meat • **Plants :** Wild berries • Seaweeds

LOW – MODERATE MERCURY LEVEL
Marine mammals : Beluga mattaq (skin and blubber) • Seal meat • **Fish:** Young / small lake trout • Burbot • **Wildfowl :** Eider eggs • Sea/herring gull eggs • **Mammals :** Caribou liver and kidneys • Muskox liver and kidneys

1. Also includes these less consumed country foods : beluga liver/kidneys, northern pike, common loon, herring/sea gull.

2. Breast milk is safe and is strongly recommended.

3. You should add the total number of times per month you eat country foods containing high mercury levels. For example, if a pregnant woman with a high blood mercury level eats beluga meat once in a month, she should not eat old/big lake trout more than once that same month for a total recommended maximum of 2 times a month.

4. While liver is an excellent source of iron, it is not recommended for pregnant women because of its excessively high levels of vitamin A.