DATE: April 10, 2019
TO: WIC Coordinators and CPAs
FROM: State WIC Staff
SUBJECT: Fish – Important Health Benefits!

What are the Dietary Guidelines for women who are pregnant, breastfeeding, or planning to get pregnant?
Consume between 8 - 12 ounces of a variety of fish per week (about 2-3 servings), from choices that are lower in mercury.

Why is this important?
Fish are good sources of omega-3 fatty acids. Omega-3’s, particularly DHA, are associated with improved infant health outcomes, such as brain and eye development, both before and after birth.

Some types of purchased and locally-caught fish contain higher levels of mercury and contaminants that could affect human health. The good news is that there are many lower mercury options available and recommended during pregnancy.

What can WIC do?
Women may have heard messages that lead them to think they should limit or avoid fish. WIC education can provide positive guidance on how to make healthy fish choices so that women get the important benefits and nutrients that fish offers.

Bottom line: the health benefits of eating fish exceed the risks as long as the fish consumed are low in mercury and other contaminants.

What resources are available?
MDH safe-eating guidelines for fish can help Minnesotans choose the best fish to add to their diets.
MDH provides science-based, general statewide safe-eating guidelines for caught or purchased fish – as well as site-specific advice for lakes and rivers where contaminants have been measured in fish.

Brochures
- Choose Your Fish (English and Spanish) – this brochure contains the newest guidelines for consuming fish.
  - Note: A Family Guide to Eating Fish (both English and Spanish) – please recycle any copies of this brochure that you may still have on hand. This is an older version with outdated guidelines and should not be distributed.
- Order brochures using the print or online-activated order form on MDH’s Fish Consumption website.
FISH – IMPORTANT HEALTH BENEFITS!

- Choose Your Fish and Eat Fish Often? brochures can be viewed on the web site and printed.

Minnesota lakes and river site-specific information: fish consumption guidelines for all waters from which fish have been tested in Minnesota are available online at:
- MDH Site-Specific Meal Advice
- Department of Natural Resources (DNR) LakeFinder (lakes only)
- DNR Mobile LakeFinder

Questions?
- About placing an order: contact Rick Kipp at 651.201.4900, rick.kipp@state.mn.us.
- About fish consumption guidelines: contact Pat McCann at 651.201.4915, patricia.mccann@state.mn.us.

Resources:
Eating Fish: What Pregnant Women and Parents Should Know (FDA)
Nutrition During Pregnancy FAQ (American College of Obstetricians & Gynecologists)
Dietary Guidelines, 2015-2020