

Government Agencies Differ on a Reference Dose for Mercury

A **Reference Dose** is the estimated daily dose of a substance that can be consumed safely over a lifetime, even for sensitive populations. Three U.S. government agencies and the World Health Organization have recommended safe intake levels for mercury in food.

- **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency**—
0.1 micrograms per kilogram of body weight per day.
- **U.S. Food and Drug Administration**—
0.4 micrograms per kilogram of body weight per day.
- **Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry**—
0.5 micrograms per kilogram of body weight per day.
- **World Health Organization**—
1.6 micrograms per kilogram of body weight per day.

(U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's reference dose is the lowest due to the inclusion of an extremely conservative safety factor.)