
Introduction

Purity in nutrients and herbal products is increasingly a concern, particularly in the United States because there is no regulatory supervision of these products to assure purity or quality control. For example, the Food and Drug Administration does not certify purity of nutrients and herbals products. Some popular nutrition products contain essential omega fatty acids, often derived from fish. I tested popular fish oil supplements to see if they had traces of the toxic heavy metal, mercury.

The testing was done using internal capsule contents to prevent outside contamination. The forensic analysis used special cold vapor atomic absorption spectroscopy and was carried out by National Medical Services of Willow Grove, Pennsylvania.

The analysis showed that all the samples had no detectable total mercury. (The analysis could detect as little as 0.1 micrograms of total mercury per gram).

The following oils were tested:

- Twinlab Emulsified Super Max EPA
- Twinlab EPA New & Improved
- Twinlab Omega-3 Concentrate
- Nature's Way Max EPA Fish Oil
- Amni Omega-3 Marine Fish Oil
- Nordic Naturals DHA Junior
- Atkins Diet Essential Oils
- Health From The Sun Ultra DHA 50
- Kyolic-EPA (Aged Garlic & Fish Oil)

Other non-fish oils were tested to confirm the quality of the testing and to check for random contamination in product processing. They also were all without detectable mercury. They were:

- Natrol Flax Borage Omega-3
- Health From The Sun Organic Flax Oil
- Nature's Herbs Borage-Power Oil
- Nature's Way Organic Flax Oil

In conclusion, it appears that the independent testing and/or the quality control measures claimed by these companies are being done as far as potential mercury contamination is concerned. At the least, the amount of mercury in the fish used is so minimal as to be below the detectable limit by the method used. In any event, the common brands tested appear to offer no mercury risk. While this is positive health news, it cannot be assumed that every brand is free of mercury.

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Disclosure: Dr. Schaller is a stockholder in Vitacost.com who helped support this study.