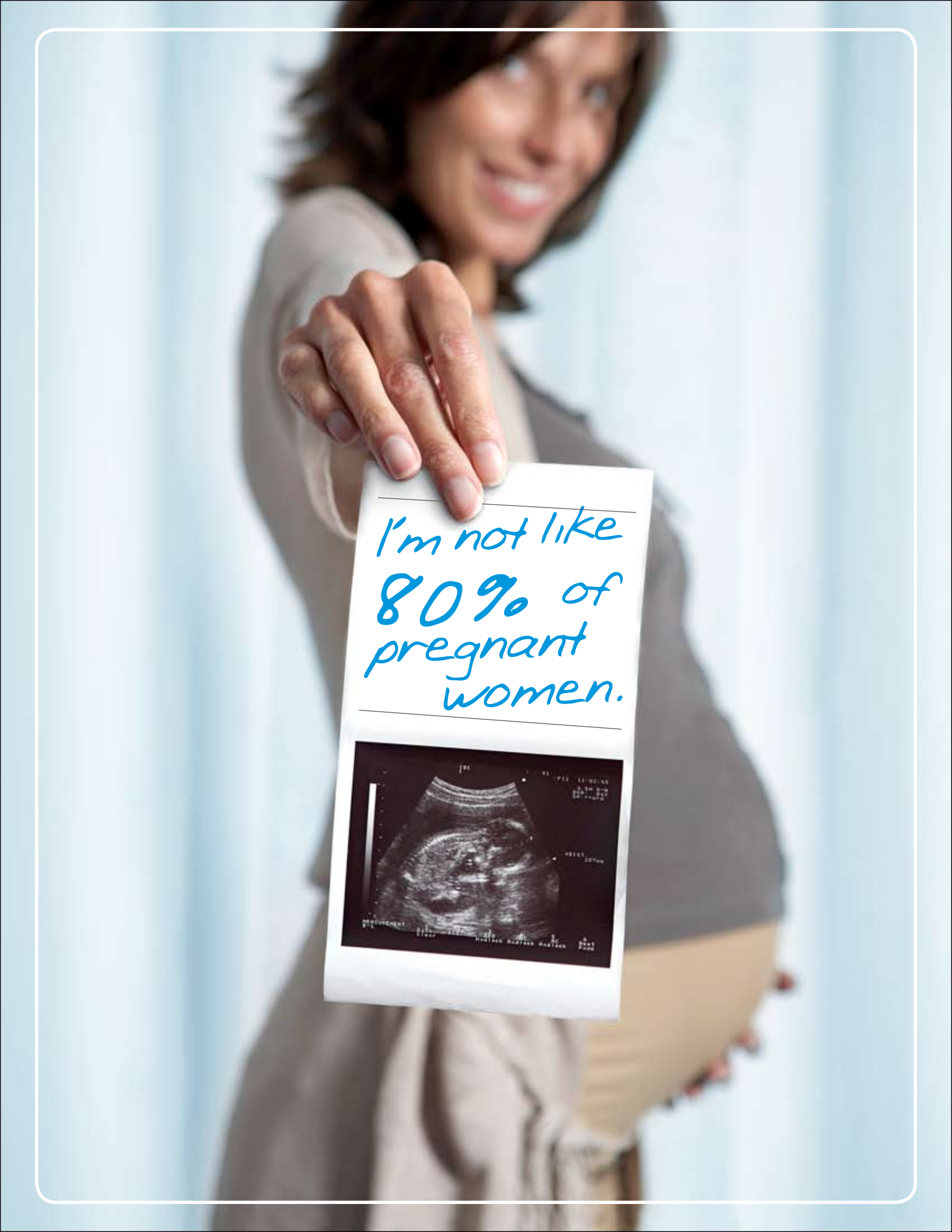
I'm not like
80% of
pregnant
women.

I AM EATING FISH AS PART OF MY HEALTHY PREGNANCY DIET

Fish is a lean protein that's low in calories and fat and packed with omega-3s. It's good for both your heart and brain, and an overwhelming amount of science shows the many lifelong benefits to mother and child.

A nutrient-rich food, fish is an excellent source of:

- Long-chain omega-3 fatty acids, called EPA and DHA.
- Lean, high-quality protein.
- Vitamins B and D.
- Essential amino acids—lysine, methionine, arginine, and taurine.
- Zinc, iodine and selenium.

However, according to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration pregnant women today eat on average less than 2 ounces of fish per week. Although recent science shows that more than 2 servings per week[1] are beneficial to both mom and baby, other studies show that 80 percent of women of child-bearing age eat even less.

Fish is, in short, a wonder-food. It provides pregnant mothers lean protein that gives them the energy they'll need, while providing the child they are waiting for with the nutrients crucial for optimal development.

HOW DOES FISH BENEFIT BOTH MOM-TO-BE AND THE BABY SHE'S CARRYING?

Omega-3s play an important role in the way your brain works and are necessary for normal growth and development. These good fats are essential because your body can't make them on its own. There are two main types of omega-3s:

- Plants and nuts contain mostly alpha-linolenic acid (ALA) omega-3s. These are also called **short-chain omega-3s**.
- Fish contain mostly eicosapetaenoic acid (EPA) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA). These are called **long-chain omega-3s**.

The body does a poor job of turning short-chain omega-3s into long-chain omega-3s, so it is important to eat fish to get plenty of EPA and DHA omega-3s. DHA helps babies' eyes and brains develop normally. All of the growing baby's DHA must come from the mother's diet. DHA is especially important during those last few months of pregnancy. Breastfed babies obtain the benefit of Mom's DHA. Formula manufacturers have recently supplemented some infant formulas with DHA as well. *The richest whole food source of DHA is fish, especially oily fish like tuna.*

Leading authorities on health, such as the FDA and the American Heart Association, recognize the nutritional value of fish and promote its consumption as part of a healthy, balanced diet.

THE OVERWHELMING AMOUNT OF SCIENCE SHOWS THE MANY HEALTH BENEFITS TO MOTHER AND CHILD.

Numerous recent and independent medical studies show that women who eat fish rich in omega-3s during pregnancy see a positive affect on their own health and the health and development of their baby. These benefits last through childhood and may impact lifelong health and mental capacity. In addition, emerging science suggests that consumption may be associated with a reduced likelihood of preterm labor and a reduced chance of postpartum depression.

The Lancet: *Of 14,541 babies followed during eight years, mothers who ate the most fish while pregnant had children who scored higher on tests than those whose mothers ate less. (2007)*

American Journal of Clinical Nutrition: *Infants of women who followed their typical fish-deficient diet had lower visual test scores than infants of mothers with a diet rich in DHA omega-3s. (2008)*

The American Journal of Epidemiology: *When evaluated for vocabulary skills, children whose mothers ate canned tuna at least twice per week during their second-trimester scored substantially higher on developmental tests than the children of mothers who reported not eating fish. (2008)*

The Journal of Pediatrics: *In this study of the Inuit of Arctic Quebec, higher DHA concentration was associated with better visual, brain and motor development, indicating a need for substantial increases in DHA during the spurt of brain development in the third trimester. (2008)*

American Journal of Clinical Nutrition: *This study looked at over 25,000 children born from 1997–2002 and found both higher fish consumption and increased duration of breastfeeding are linked to better physical and mental development of infants. (2008)*

Full-text of the studies are available at www.hmhb.org/pnwg

SO SHOULD I WORRY ABOUT MERCURY?

Ten species of fish represent the vast majority, over 90%, of the fish Americans prefer eat the most. All of these species have trace amounts of naturally occurring mercury found in all fish and in tiny amounts. Study after study confirms these amounts are too small to be of concern and pregnant women can safely eat a variety of these fish. This includes one of the historically most commonly eaten and affordable fish, canned light and white albacore tuna. Half of the fish you eat every week (6 ounces) can be white albacore tuna. Out of an abundance of caution there are only four higher-mercury fish that should be avoided in pregnancy—shark, king mackerel, tilefish and swordfish. There are no restrictions on eating any fish if you are not pregnant, breastfeeding or planning on becoming pregnant.

[1] Choiniére, C.J., Timbo, B., Street, D., Trumbo, P., Fein, S., Fish Consumption by Women of Childbearing Age, Pregnant Women, and Mothers of Infants. Presented at the International Association for Food Protection Annual Meeting, Columbus, Ohio, August 3–6, 2008

Perinatal Nutrition Working Group

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