STAR TUNA

Remember when all tuna was canned tuna? (Okay. Some people were eating fresh tuna while most of us were reaching for the mayo.) These days, tuna is just as likely to come in a pouch. That means no draining and no BPA. Bisphenol A is a building block of some plastics that shows up in just about all can liners. In some animal studies, BPA alters behaviors that are influenced by hormones. And some—but not all—animal studies suggest that BPA may increase the risk of cancer, diabetes, and heart disease. With tuna-in-a-pouch, those worries are gone.

Also gone in StarKist Low Sodium Albacore White or Chunk Light Tuna is much of the salt you’d get from canned tuna, which you need like a hole in the head (especially if you’re mashing with mayo). Instead of the usual sodium you’d get in half a small can of Albacore (190 milligrams in a 2 oz. serving) or Chunk Light (180 mg), you get 70 mg (Albacore) or 130 mg (Chunk Light) in a (2.6 oz.) pouch.

And the pouch delivers just 80 or 90 calories, which are well-spent on protein (20 grams) and on EPA and DHA (200 to 290 mg total), the omega-3 fats that are linked to a lower risk of heart disease. It’s less omega-3s than you’d get from salmon, but more than most DHA-fortified foods contain.

Tuna does have mercury, but even young children and nursing, pregnant, or planning-to-be-pregnant women can eat up to 12 ounces of light canned tuna (or 3 oz. of albacore for each 100 pounds of body weight) per week. Others can have up to three times that much.

So check out the pouch. It may be time for a tuna-up.

StarKist: (800) 252-1587

DIRTY SECRETS

“Made with a sprinkle of salt and a taste of butter,” says the label of Pop Secret microwave HomeStyle Popcorn. A “sprinkle” is industry-speak for “more sodium (240 milligrams per serving) than most competitors (about 160 mg).” And that “taste of butter”? It’s code for “enough butter-flavored partially hydrogenated soybean oil to supply 4 grams of trans fat,” which is two days’ worth. It’s not just HomeStyle. Nearly all Pop Secret (and Jiffy Pop) popcorns still have trans fat. In contrast, nearly all Act II, Newman’s Own, Orville Redenbacher, and Smart Balance microwave popcorns have replaced partially hydrogenated oils with (mostly) palm oil.

Stick to 94% Fat Free versions of those brands, since their fattier cousins have 2 to 4 grams of saturated fat in a 4-cup serving. Better yet, look for Pop Weaver. Earlier this year, the brand switched to canola oil, so you don’t have to worry about either saturated or trans fat.

The 94% Fat Free varieties also trim the calories from about 150 down to about 100 per 4 cups. But that’s not much popcorn. Most bags hold 10 to 12 cups. (A “small” movie theater popcorn at a typical chain is 11 cups.)

Bottom line: look for a no-trans microwave popcorn with the fewest calories and the least sat fat and sodium in the “1 cup popped” serving listed in the Nutrition Facts. Then multiply by 4 to estimate what you’re likely to get if you eat a third to half of the bag.

Diamond Foods: (209) 467-6000