



# Benefits and risks of consuming Atlantic walrus in Nunavik

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## Where?



## How?

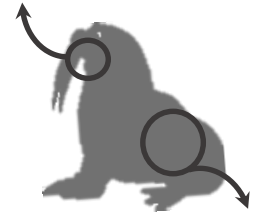
### Inuit Knowledge



34 interviews in Ivujivik, Inukjuak, Quaqtaq and Kangisqsalujjuaq

### Scientific Knowledge

755 walrus tongues tested for the *Trichinella* parasite



17 walrus livers, muscle and fat tested for 2 nutrients & 1 contaminant

## Eating walrus has many health benefits

### High levels of good fats

High in omega-3 fatty acids that are good for the heart and brain (including for the unborn baby)

### Good levels of nutrients

High in selenium, proteins and vitamins that help the body fight stress and stay strong

### Low levels of mercury

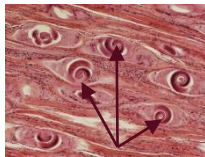
No need to worry about it!



## However, there are some risks

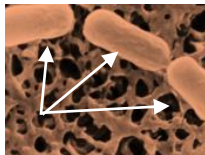
## How to reduce these risks?

### Parasite *Trichinella nativa*



= causes trichinellosis

### Bacteria *Clostridium botulinum*



= causes botulism

1. Tag all pieces of meat & send the tongue to the **Nunavik Research Centre (Makivik)** to be tested for *Trichinella*.



2. Follow **simple rules** during the **butchering** and **aging** process

If the harvested walrus is infected, **do not eat any part of it!**



**Details on the back !**

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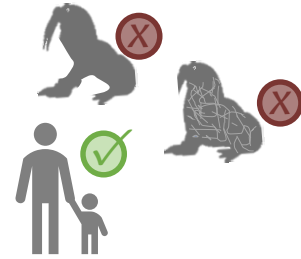


# Key points to consider when hunting, butchering, aging and consuming Atlantic walrus in Nunavik



## 1. Walrus hunting

- ✓ Do not hunt unhealthy looking individuals (i.e. abnormally thin).
- ✓ Avoid old individuals (i.e. large ones with long/broken tusks and rough/thick skin with scars).
- ✓ When possible, bring Inuit youth for them to learn walrus hunting practices.

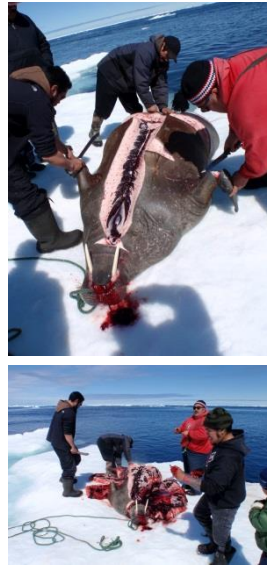


## 2. Walrus butchering

As soon as possible, the harvested meat must be chilled.

### To avoid botulism

- ✓ Butcher the walrus on flat rock surfaces or ice platforms, ideally on top of a clean tarp.
- ✓ Place parts in clean plastic containers immediately after cutting, and keep on ice until preparation.
- ✓ Clean and disinfect butchering tools after each use.
- ✓ Avoid rinsing parts or tools with shoreline water.
- ✓ Avoid butchering an animal at the same site as previously butchered animals (if not possible, use a clean tarp).



### To avoid Trichinella

- ✓ Do not eat fresh (raw) parts of the walrus during the hunt.
- ✓ Using the kit provided by the NRC: tag all pieces of meat & place the tongue in the plastic bag – send it to the NRC to be tested for *Trichinella*.
- ✓ If the harvested walrus is infected with *Trichinella*, all pieces of meat from the infected walrus should be retrieved and destroyed (by burning or sinking).
- ✓ Do not provide infected parts of the walrus to dogs.



## 3. Aging walrus - making igunaq

### To avoid botulism

- ✓ Do not age walrus in air tight containers (ex. plastic container tightly closed). The preparation should be well ventilated.
- ✓ Age walrus in a cool place, protected from the sun, that lets air in (e.g. under the house).
- ✓ Once igunaq is ready, keep it frozen.
- ✓ If hunted in the summer, the Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services (NRBHSS) and the Department of Public Health recommend storing the raw meat in the freezer (home or community) and begin the fermentation process in the fall, when temperatures are cooler.



### To avoid Trichinella

- ✓ Always test the walrus tongue meat for *Trichinella*. The process of aging does not kill the parasite.



## 4. Conservation & storage

- ✓ When the igunaq is ready, keep it in the freezer to stop the fermentation.
- ✓ Igunaq preparations should be stored in areas below 3°C to avoid any contamination.

## 5. Consuming walrus

- ✓ When properly butchered and prepared, walrus meat and igunaq contribute greatly to a healthy diet – walrus is rich in nutrients important for strong healthy bodies.
- ✓ **Share your meals with younger Inuit so that they can learn to appreciate the taste of igunaq.**