

CRYSTALS IN CANNED FISH

Hard glass-like crystals are occasionally found in canned fish products.

What Are They?

While they resemble glass particles and are often mistaken as such, they are crystals made up of magnesium, ammonia and phosphate molecules – chemical substances which are normally present in the bodies of fish, animals and man; and are often known as “struvite” crystals.

Are They Harmless?

Yes. In fact, these chemical substances are essential in one form or another for normal health. The crystals have the same hardness as normal table salt hence they will not injure the enamel of healthy teeth. They are practically insoluble in the saliva of the mouth and should they be swallowed, they will readily dissolve in the digestive juices of the stomach.

How May They Be Distinguished From Glass?

Place the crystal(s) in a small heat-proof dish, add a few drops of muriatic acid (10% hydrochloric acid) and warm gently. The crystals should dissolve in 5 or 10 minutes whereas glass particles will not.

While muriatic acid is readily available for the cleaning of bricks, another alternative is to use a few drops of vinegar. Since it is a much weaker acid, it may be necessary to leave it for a day or two before the crystals will dissolve.

Further assistance and/or information may be obtained from:

The Fish Inspection Laboratory
Department of Fisheries and Oceans
2250 Boundary Road
Burnaby, BC
V5M 4L9 Telephone: (604) 666-4427