

Catch the Latest Advice

[health.ny.gov/fish](http://health.ny.gov/fish)

MAP INSIDE

# Leatherstocking/ Central Region

Health Advice on Eating Fish You Catch



Including Chenango, Madison, Montgomery, Oneida,  
Otsego, Schoharie, and parts of Herkimer counties

## Why We Have Advice

Fishing is fun, and fish are an important part of a healthy diet. Fish contain high-quality protein, essential nutrients, healthy fish oils, and are low in saturated fat. However, some fish contain chemicals at levels that may be harmful to health. To help people make healthier choices about which fish they eat, the New York State Department of Health issues advice about eating sportfish (fish you catch). The health advice about which fish to eat depends on:

### Where You Fish (see inside map)

Fish from waters that are affected by industrial sources are more likely to be contaminated than fish from other waters. **In the Leatherstocking/Central Region, for example, fish from Oneida Lake are generally less contaminated than fish from the Mohawk River.** This is because Oneida Lake has been less affected by certain industrial chemicals. If you're planning a fish meal, please read the section *Where can the whole family eat the fish?* inside this brochure.



Some fish are known to move from lakes and rivers into tributaries, such as from Unadilla River into Butternut Creek. The lake and river advice also applies to its tributaries up to the first barrier that stops fish from moving upstream or downstream, such as a dam or waterfall.

### Who You Are



**People who can bear children (under 50) and children under 15 (the sensitive population) are advised to limit the kinds of fish they eat and how often they eat and how often they eat them.**

People who eat highly contaminated fish and become pregnant may have an increased risk of having children who are slower to develop and learn. Chemicals may have a greater effect on the development of young children or developing babies. Also, some chemicals may be passed on in mother's milk.

People beyond their childbearing years and those who do not bear children (the general population) may face fewer health risks from some chemicals. For that reason, the advice for the general population allows them to eat more kinds of sportfish and more often (see inside table).

### What You Catch



**There is specific advice about limiting or not eating certain kinds of fish in some of this region's waterbodies (see inside table).**

Some fish have higher levels of chemicals than others. In general, smaller fish are less contaminated than larger, older fish of the same species. You can also choose to eat fish from waters not listed in the inside table and follow the general advice to eat up to four meals per month.

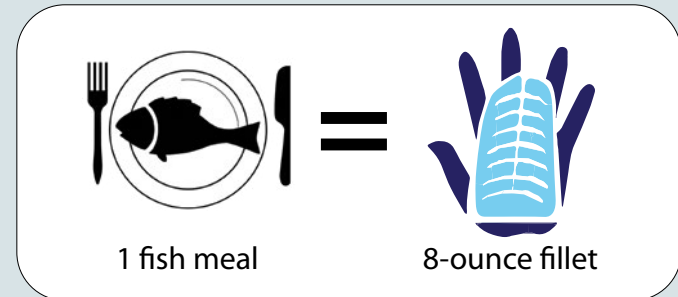


### Health Risks

The primary chemicals of concern in the Leatherstocking/Central Region are PCBs and mercury. These chemicals build up in your body over time. Health problems that may result from chemicals in fish range from small changes in health that are hard to detect to birth defects and cancer. (Visit [www.health.ny.gov/fish](http://www.health.ny.gov/fish) for more information.)

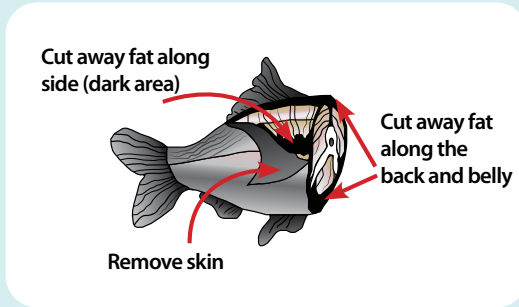
### Tips for Healthier Eating

- Try to space out your fish meals. For example, if the advice is that you can eat up to four meals a month, don't eat them all in the same week. This is particularly important for the sensitive population.
- Bacteria, viruses, or parasites can be in or on fish. Keep harvested fish cold. Wear gloves when skinning and trimming. Wash hands and surfaces often when preparing fish, and keep raw foods separate. Cook fish and shellfish thoroughly before eating.



## Tips to Reduce PCBs

- PCBs are found at higher levels in the fat of fish. Reduce fat by properly trimming, skinning, and cooking your catch:



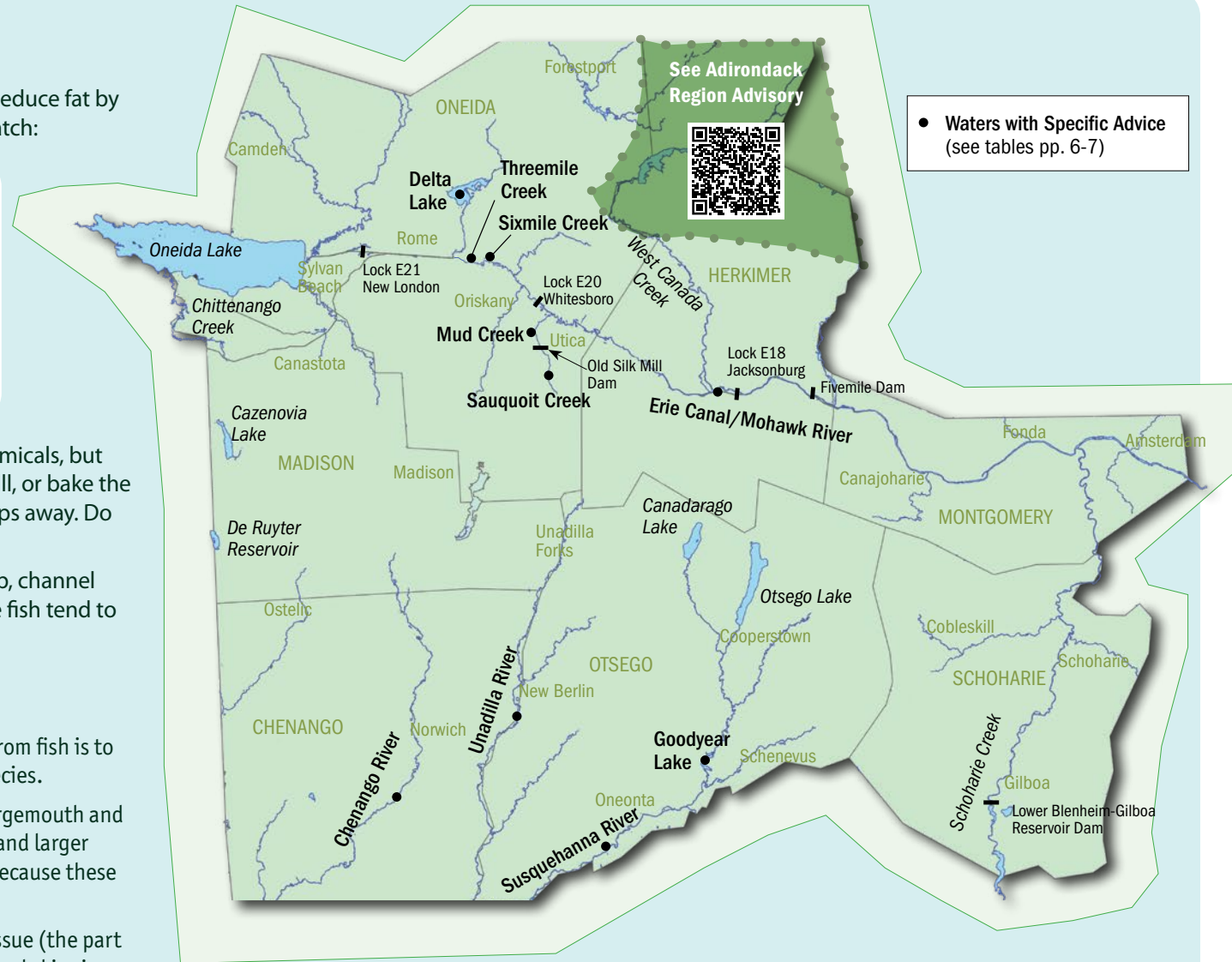
- Cooking or soaking fish cannot eliminate the chemicals, but heat from cooking melts some of the fat. Broil, grill, or bake the trimmed, skinned fish on a rack so that the fat drips away. Do not use drippings in sauces or gravies.
- To reduce exposures to PCBs avoid or eat less carp, channel catfish, lake trout, and white perch because these fish tend to have higher levels of these contaminants.

## Tips to Reduce Mercury

- The only way to reduce how much mercury you get from fish is to avoid certain species or eat smaller fish within a species.
- To reduce exposures to mercury, avoid or eat less largemouth and smallmouth bass, northern pike, pickerel, walleye, and larger yellow perch (for example, longer than 10 inches) because these fish tend to have higher mercury levels.
- Mercury is distributed throughout a fish's muscle tissue (the part you eat), rather than in the fat and skin. Trimming and skinning will not reduce the amount of mercury in a fish meal.

## Where can the whole family eat the fish?


The Leatherstocking/Central Region has great fishing. Everyone in the family can follow the general advice and enjoy up to four fish meals a month from any waters in this region not listed in the table (pp. 6-7) such as Oneida Lake, Cazenovia Lake, Canadarago Lake, Otsego Lake, and Chittenango Creek.



## What about tributaries and connected waters?



The specific advice in the table applies to tributaries and connected waters if there are no dams, falls, or barriers to stop the fish from moving upstream or downstream. This is because chemicals remain in fish when they move from one waterbody to another. If you are not sure about possible fish barriers near waters where you are fishing, call your DEC office listed on the back of this brochure.

## Leatherstocking Region Waters with Specific Advisories:

 Location & Tributaries (Chemical of Concern)	 Fish	 General Population	 Sensitive Population
<b>All waters NOT listed (Finger Lakes Region)</b>	All fish	Up to 4 meals/month	Up to 4 meals/month
<b>Chenango River (Mercury)</b>	Walleye	Greater than 22", up to 1 meal/month; Less than 22", up to 4 meals/month	DON'T EAT
	All other fish	Up to 4 meals/month	DON'T EAT
<b>Delta Lake (Mercury)</b>	Walleye	Greater than 23", up to 1 meal/month; Less than 23", up to 4 meals/month	DON'T EAT
	All other fish	Up to 4 meals/month	DON'T EAT
<b>Goodyear Lake (Mercury)</b>	Walleye	Greater than 22", up to 1 meal/month; Less than 22", up to 4 meals/month	DON'T EAT
	All other fish	Up to 4 meals/month	DON'T EAT
<b>Mohawk River/Erie Canal, from Feeder Dam 1 on Mohawk River and Lock E21 at New London to Lock E20 at Whitesboro (PCBs)</b>	Carp	DON'T EAT	DON'T EAT
	Rock bass, Smallmouth bass, Walleye, Yellow perch	Up to 1 meal/month	DON'T EAT
	White sucker <sup>1</sup>	Up to 4 meals/month	Up to 4 meals/month
	All other fish	Up to 4 meals/month	Up to 1 meal/month
<b>Mohawk River/Erie Canal, between Lock E20 at Whitesboro and Lock E18 at Jacksonburg (PCBs)</b>	Carp, Largemouth bass, Smallmouth bass, Tiger muskellunge, White sucker	DON'T EAT	DON'T EAT
	Walleye	Up to 1 meal/month	Up to 1 meal/month
	All other fish	Up to 4 meals/month	Up to 1 meal/month

The sensitive population refers to people who may bear children under the age of 50 and children under 15. The general population refers to everyone else.

<sup>1</sup> These fish are a good choice for the whole family. See [www.health.ny.gov/fish/background.htm](http://www.health.ny.gov/fish/background.htm) for more information about how advisories are set.

 Location & Tributaries (Chemical of Concern)	 Fish	 General Population	 Sensitive Population
<b>Mohawk River/Erie Canal, between Lock E18 at Jacksonburg and Fivemile Dam below Little Falls (PCBs)</b>	Carp	DON'T EAT	DON'T EAT
	Rock bass <sup>1</sup>	Up to 4 meals/month	Up to 4 meals/month
	Walleye	Up to 1 meal/month	Up to 1 meal/month
<b>Mohawk River/Erie Canal, between Fivemile Dam (downstream of Little Falls) and Cohoes Falls (Albany County) (PCBs)</b>	All other fish	Up to 4 meals/month	Up to 1 meal/month
	Carp	DON'T EAT	DON'T EAT
	Brown bullhead <sup>1</sup> , Bluegill <sup>1</sup> , Blueback herring <sup>1</sup> , Rock bass <sup>1</sup> , Smallmouth bass <sup>1</sup> , Walleye <sup>1</sup> , Yellow perch <sup>1</sup>	Up to 4 meals/month	Up to 4 meals/month
	All other fish	Up to 4 meals/month	Up to 1 meal/month
<b>Mud Creek, tributary to Sauquoit Creek (PCBs)</b>	Brown trout, White sucker	DON'T EAT	DON'T EAT
	All other fish	Up to 4 meals/month	DON'T EAT
<b>Sauquoit Creek, between Old Silk Mill Dam near New Hartford/Paris town line and Mohawk River (PCBs)</b>	Brown trout, White sucker	DON'T EAT	DON'T EAT
	All other fish	Up to 4 meals/month	DON'T EAT
<b>Sixmile Creek, downstream of Gulf Road to mouth of Mohawk River (PFAS, PCBs)</b>	All fish	DON'T EAT	DON'T EAT
<b>Susquehanna River (Mercury)</b>	Walleye	Greater than 22", up to 1 meal/month; Less than 22", up to 4 meals/month	DON'T EAT
	All other fish	Up to 4 meals/month	DON'T EAT
<b>Threemile Creek (PCBs, PFAS)</b>	All fish	DON'T EAT	DON'T EAT
<b>Unadilla River (Mercury)</b>	Walleye	Greater than 22", up to 1 meal/month; Less than 22", up to 4 meals/month	DON'T EAT
	All other fish	Up to 4 meals/month	DON'T EAT

## Fish from Stores and Restaurants



The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulates the sale of commercial fish in markets. Due to concerns about mercury, the FDA and the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) advise pregnant people, people who may become pregnant, nursing mothers, and young children to avoid eating shark, swordfish, king mackerel, tuna (bigeye), marlin, orange roughy, and tilefish.

Visit [www.fda.gov/fishadvice](http://www.fda.gov/fishadvice) or [www.epa.gov/fishadvice](http://www.epa.gov/fishadvice) for more information.

### More Information

#### New York State Fish Advisories

Department of Health  
[www.health.ny.gov/fish](http://www.health.ny.gov/fish)  
(518) 402-7800  
(800) 458-1158  
[BTSA@health.ny.gov](mailto:BTSA@health.ny.gov)

#### New York State Fishing

Department of Environmental  
Conservation (DEC)  
[www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/fishing.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/fishing.html)

#### DEC Region 4

(Montgomery, Otsego, and Schoharie  
counties)  
(607) 652-7366  
[fwfish4@dec.ny.gov](mailto:fwfish4@dec.ny.gov)

#### New York State Fishing, cont.

##### DEC Region 6

(Herkimer and Oneida counties)  
Utica Office  
(315) 793-2554  
[fwfish6@dec.ny.gov](mailto:fwfish6@dec.ny.gov)

##### DEC Region 7

(Chenango and Madison counties)  
Cortland Sub-Office  
(607) 753-3095  
[fwfish7@dec.ny.gov](mailto:fwfish7@dec.ny.gov)

Cover photo courtesy of  
Jim Root Fishing