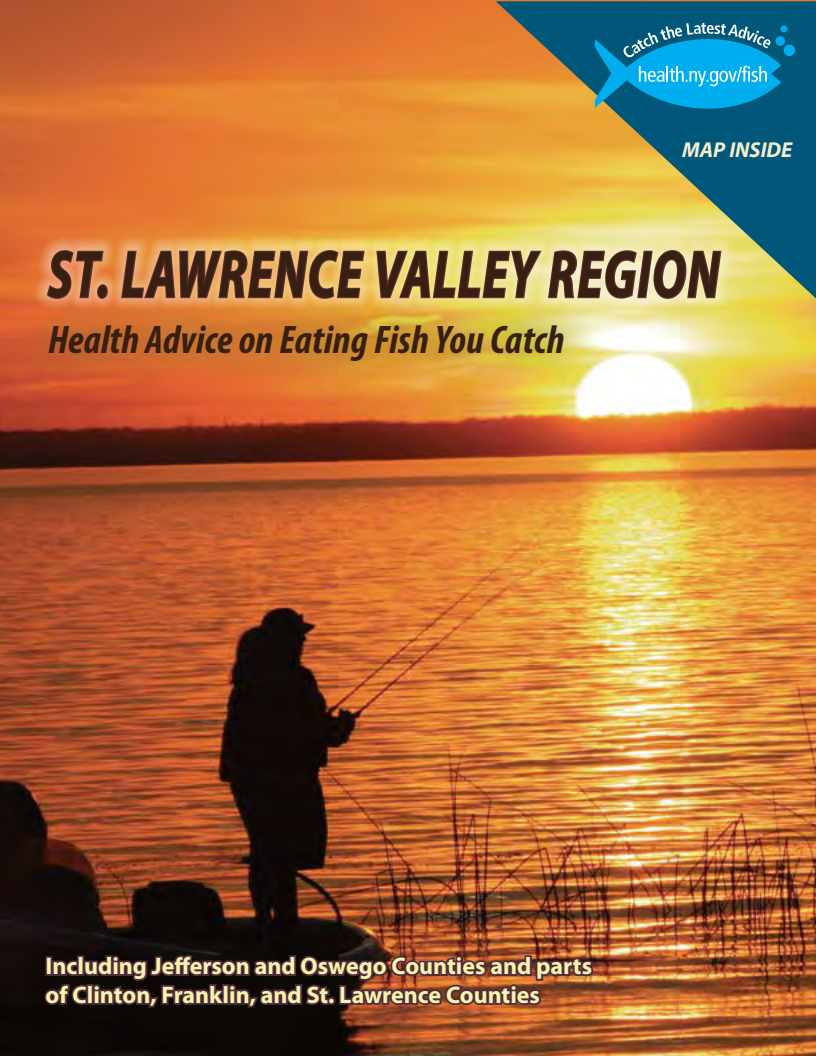
Catch the Latest Advice
health.ny.gov/fish

MAP INSIDE

ST. LAWRENCE VALLEY REGION

Health Advice on Eating Fish You Catch



Including Jefferson and Oswego Counties and parts of Clinton, Franklin, and St. Lawrence 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 St. Lawrence Valley region for example, fish from Black Lake are generally less contaminated than fish from Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River.** This is because Black 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. The lake and river advice also applies to its tributaries up to the first barrier that stops fish from moving upstream, such as a dam or waterfall.

Who You Are

Women of childbearing age (under 50) and children under 15 are advised to limit the kinds of fish they eat and how often they eat them. Women 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 unborn babies. Also, some chemicals may be passed on in mother's milk.

Women beyond their childbearing years and men may face fewer health risks from some chemicals. For that reason, the advice for women over age 50 and men over age 15 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 St. Lawrence Valley region are PCBs, dioxin, mirex 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 for more info.)

COMMON FISH OF THE ST. LAWRENCE VALLEY REGION

Brook trout

Brown bullhead

Brown trout

Carp

Chain pickerel

Channel catfish

Chinook salmon

Coho salmon

Lake trout

Largemouth bass

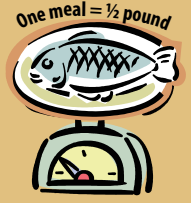
Northern pike

Pumpkinseed/Sunfish

Rainbow trout

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 women and young children.



- 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, Dioxin, and Mirex

- PCBs, dioxin and mirex 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, dioxin, and mirex, avoid or eat less carp, channel catfish, lake trout, salmon (chinook, coho), and white perch because these fish tend to have higher levels of these contaminants.

Tips to Avoid Mercury

- The only way to reduce how much mercury you get from fish is to avoid certain species or eat less contaminated fish.
- 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.

Rock bass

Smallmouth bass

Walleye

White perch

White sucker

Yellow perch

Location & Tributaries *(Chemical of Concern)*	Fish	Men Over 15 & Women Over 50	Women Under 50 & Children Under 15
All waters NOT listed (St. Lawrence Region)	All fish	Up to 4 meals/month	Up to 4 meals/month
Grass River, Mouth to Massena Power Canal *(PCBs)*	All fish	DON'T EAT	DON'T EAT
Lake Champlain, Whole Lake *(PCBs, Mercury)*	Walleye	Greater than 19", up to 1 meal/month; Less than 19", up to 4 meals/month	DON'T EAT
	Lake trout	Greater than 25", up to 1 meal/month; Less than 25", up to 4 meals/month	DON'T EAT
	All other fish	Up to 4 meals/month	DON'T EAT
Lake Champlain, Bay within Cumberland Head to Crab Island *(PCBs)*	**Lake Champlain** advice		
	and American eel	Up to 1 meal/month	DON'T EAT
Lake Ontario* *(PCBs, Mirex, Dioxin)*	White sucker	Up to 1 meal/month	DON'T EAT
	White perch	East of Point Breeze, up to 1 meal/month; West of Point Breeze, DON'T EAT	DON'T EAT
	Lake trout	Greater than 25", up to 1 meal/month; Less than 25", up to 4 meals/month	DON'T EAT
	Carp, Channel catfish	DON'T EAT	DON'T EAT
	Brown trout	Greater than 20", up to 1 meal/month; Less than 20", up to 4 meals/month	DON'T EAT
	All other fish	Up to 4 meals/month	DON'T EAT
Massena Power Canal *(PCBs)*	Smallmouth bass	Up to 1 meal/month	DON'T EAT
	All other fish	Up to 4 meals/month	DON'T EAT
Oswego River, Mouth to Oswego Power Dam *(PCBs, Mirex, Dioxin)*	Same advice as **Lake Ontario**		
Oswego River, Oswego Power Dam to Upper Dam at Fulton *(PCBs)*	Channel catfish	Up to 1 meal/month	DON'T EAT
	All other fish	Up to 4 meals/month	DON'T EAT
Red Lake *(Mercury)*	Walleye	Up to 1 meal/month	DON'T EAT
	All other fish	Up to 4 meals/month	DON'T EAT
Salmon River, Mouth to Salmon River Reservoir *(PCBs, Mirex)*	**Lake Ontario** advice		
	and Smallmouth bass	Up to 1 meal/month	DON'T EAT
Salmon River Reservoir *(Mercury)*	Largemouth bass, Smallmouth bass	Up to 1 meal/month	DON'T EAT
St. Lawrence River, Whole River *(PCBs, Mirex, Dioxin)*	Same advice as **Lake Ontario**		
St. Lawrence River, Bay and cove east of South Channel Bridge, near St. Lawrence/Franklin County line *(PCBs, Mirex, Dioxin)*	All fish	DON'T EAT	DON'T EAT

** Harvest/possession of American eel is prohibited per DEC Regulations*

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. 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.

Where can the whole family eat the fish?

The St. Lawrence Valley 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, including Black Lake and Oneida Lake.

Black Lake and Oneida Lake are just examples of fishing spots where the four meals a month general advice applies. The DEC fishing website listed on the back of this brochure has a wealth of resources to help you find public access fishing sites, boat launches, and license information. It also includes information on what types of fish are found in different waterbodies across New York.

Remember to check for specific advice like that listed in the table if you plan on eating the fish you catch. If you have questions about health advice for your favorite waterbody call the fish advisory team at (518) 402-7800.

Visit www.health.ny.gov/fish for the latest advice about eating your catch for all regions in the state.

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, FDA advises pregnant women, women who may become pregnant, nursing mothers and young children to avoid shark, swordfish, king mackerel and tilefish.

Food and Drug Administration: (888) SAFEFOOD, (888) 723-3366

More Information

New York State Fish Advisories

Department of Health
www.health.ny.gov/fish
(518) 402-7800
(800) 458-1158
email BTSA@health.state.ny.us

Other Fish Information

Environmental Protection Agency
www.epa.gov/ost/fish

Food and Drug Administration
www.fda.gov/Food/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/ucm110591.htm

New York State Fishing

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

New York State Fishing, cont.

DEC Region 5
(Clinton & Franklin counties)

Raybrook Office
(518) 897-1333

DEC Region 6
(Jefferson & St. Lawrence counties)

Watertown Office
(315) 785-2263

DEC Region 7
(Oswego county)

Cortland Sub-Office
(607) 753-3095