Health Advice on Eating Fish You Catch

for Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Erie, Genesee, Niagara, Orleans, and Wyoming Counties
Why We Have Advisories

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 close to industrial sources are more likely to be contaminated than fish from other waters. In the Western Region, Lake Erie fish are generally less contaminated than Lake Ontario fish. This is because Lake Ontario has been more affected by certain industrial chemicals. Salmon, trout, and other fish are known to move from lakes into tributaries, such as Oak Orchard Creek. The lake 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 the Western Region (see inside table). Some species (kinds of 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 fish from waterbodies that are not listed on the table inside, and follow the general advice to eat up to four meals per month.
Health Risks

The primary chemicals of concern in the Western Region are PCBs, dioxin and mirex. 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.)

Tips for Healthier Eating

• 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 American eel, carp, lake trout, salmon, channel catfish, and white perch, because these western region fish tend to have higher levels of these contaminants.

• 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.
## Location & Tributaries

### Fish

#### Location & Tributaries (Chemical of Concern)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location &amp; Tributaries</th>
<th>All sizes, up to 1 meal/month</th>
<th>Up to 4 meals/month</th>
<th>All sizes, up to 1 meal/month</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All waters NOT listed (Western Region)</td>
<td>All fish</td>
<td>Up to 4 meals/month</td>
<td>Up to 4 meals/month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buffalo River and Harbor (PCBs)</td>
<td>Carp, Channel catfish, Brown bullhead, Largemouth bass, Smallmouth bass, Up to 1 meal/month</td>
<td>Up to 4 meals/month</td>
<td>Up to 1 meal/month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buffalo River &amp; Harbor, upstream of Burt Dam (PCBs)</td>
<td>Brown trout, Chinook salmon, Coho salmon, Rainbow trout</td>
<td>Up to 1 meal/month</td>
<td>Up to 1 meal/month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buffalo River &amp; Harbor, downstream of Burt Dam (PCBs)</td>
<td>Brown bullhead ², Burbot ², Rock bass ², Yellow perch ²</td>
<td>Up to 4 meals/month</td>
<td>Up to 4 meals/month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buffalo River &amp; Harbor (PCBs)</td>
<td>Carp, Channel catfish, Up to 1 meal/month</td>
<td>Up to 1 meal/month</td>
<td>Up to 1 meal/month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erie Canal, between Lockport &amp; Niagara River (PCBs)</td>
<td>Carp, Channel catfish, Up to 1 meal/month</td>
<td>Up to 4 meals/month</td>
<td>Up to 4 meals/month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake Erie (PCBs)</td>
<td>Brown bullhead ², Rainbow smelt ², Rock bass ², White sucker ², Yellow perch ²</td>
<td>Up to 4 meals/month</td>
<td>Up to 4 meals/month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake Ontario (PCBs, Mirex, Dioxin)</td>
<td>Lake trout</td>
<td>Greater than 25”, up to 1 meal/month; Less than 25”, up to 4 meals/month</td>
<td>All sizes, up to 1 meal/month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lewiston Reservoir/Powers Reservoir (PCBs)</td>
<td>Carp</td>
<td>Up to 1 meal/month</td>
<td>Up to 1 meal/month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niagara River, upstream of Niagara Falls (PCBs)</td>
<td>Same advice as Lake Erie</td>
<td>Up to 4 meals/month</td>
<td>Up to 4 meals/month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niagara River, downstream of Niagara Falls (PCBs, Mirex, Dioxin)</td>
<td>Same advice as Lake Ontario</td>
<td>Up to 4 meals/month</td>
<td>Up to 1 meal/month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niagara River (PCBs)</td>
<td>Carp, Channel catfish, Brown trout, Up to 1 meal/month</td>
<td>Up to 1 meal/month</td>
<td>Up to 1 meal/month</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Men Over 15 & Women Over 50

- Up to 4 meals/month
- Up to 1 meal/month
- Up to 2 meals/month
- Up to 1 meal/month
- Up to 4 meals/month
- Up to 1 meal/month
- Up to 4 meals/month
- Up to 1 meal/month

### Women Under 50 & Children Under 15

- Up to 4 meals/month
- Up to 1 meal/month
- Up to 2 meals/month
- Up to 1 meal/month
- Up to 4 meals/month
- Up to 1 meal/month
- Up to 4 meals/month
- Up to 1 meal/month

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1 Harvest/possession of Lake Ontario American eel is prohibited per DEC Regulations.

2 These fish are a good choice for the whole family. See www.health.ny.gov/fish/background.htm for more information about how advisories are set.
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 women, women 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 or www.epa.gov/fishadvice for more information.

More Information

New York State Fish Advisories
Department of Health
www.health.ny.gov/fish
www.health.ny.gov/fish/maps.htm
(518) 402-7800
(800) 458-1158
BTSA@health.ny.gov

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

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