

# Hooked on Fish?

## A Guide to Eating Fish in Minnesota



Minnesota has over 10,000 lakes with an abundance of fish, but there are some things you need to know about the fish in our rivers, streams and lakes before you eat them.

Fish are great to eat because they have protein, vitamins, minerals and healthy oils. Eating fish may help prevent heart disease. And most fish are healthy to eat.

Any fish you catch or buy could have pollutants, such as mercury or PCBs that can be harmful, especially for women of child-bearing age, women who are pregnant or breastfeeding and young children.

Continue to include fish in your diet, but because mercury and PCBs can be found in fish, be careful of the kind of fish you eat and how much fish you eat.



Fish eating guidelines for women of child-bearing age, pregnant or breastfeeding women and children under 15 years of age.



### Fish Caught in Minnesota



- Sunfish
- Crappie
- Yellow Perch
- Bullheads

1 meal a week.

- Walleyes shorter than 20 inches
- Northern Pike shorter than 30 inches
- Smallmouth and Largemouth bass
- Channel and Flathead catfish
- White sucker
- Drum
- Burbot

- Sauger
- Carp
- Lake trout
- White bass
- Rock bass
- Whitefish
- Other species

1 meal a month.

- Walleyes longer than 20 inches
- Northern Pike longer than 30 inches
- Muskellunge

**DO NOT EAT.**



### Fish Bought in a Store or Eaten in a Restaurant



- Salmon
- Cod
- Pollock
- Canned "light" tuna
- Catfish
- Talapia

- Herring
- Sardines
- Shrimp
- Crab
- Scallops
- Oysters

2 meals a week.

- Canned "white" tuna
- Tuna steak
- Halibut
- Lobster

2 meals a month.

- Shark
- Swordfish
- Tilefish
- King mackerel

**DO NOT EAT.**

Remember to consider all sources of fish when making a choice to eat another type of fish.



For more information on eating fish in Minnesota:

MN Department of Health-Fish Advisory Program

651.201.4911

[www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/fish](http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/fish)



St Paul-Ramsey County Public Health  
Environmental Health Section

[www.co.ramsey.mn.us](http://www.co.ramsey.mn.us)

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Keep mercury from harming your health by helping to reduce the amount of mercury that gets into our environment.

Mercury is found in some common household items, such as household thermometers, thermostats, and fluorescent lights. These should not be put into the trash. If you have these items at home, most counties have household hazardous waste sites where you may bring them and they will be disposed of properly.



## Fish eating guidelines for men and women not planning to be pregnant.



### Fish Caught in Minnesota



- Sunfish
- Crappie
- Yellow Perch
- Bullheads

**Unlimited amount.**

- Walleyes
- Northern Pike
- Smallmouth and Largemouth bass
- Channel and Flathead catfish
- White sucker
- Drum
- Burbot

- Sauger
- Carp
- Lake trout
- White bass
- Rock bass
- Whitefish
- Other species

**1 meal a week.**



### Fish Bought in a Store or Eaten in a Restaurant



Limit the following:

- Shark
- Swordfish
- Tilefish
- King Mackerel

**1 meal a month.**

*Adults who eat fish only during vacation or one season of the year can eat fish twice as often as recommended by these guidelines.*

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Who should use these guidelines?

Everyone should follow these guidelines, but the guidelines are different for different types of people. Women of child-bearing age, women who are pregnant or breastfeeding and young children have more strict guidelines. Adults have slightly less strict guidelines.

### How does mercury get into the fish?

Mercury can come from natural and man-made sources. Most of the mercury that pollutes our air and water comes from coal-burning power plants, coal mining and coal burning. Mercury can also be found in trash that may have fluorescent lights, household thermometers and thermostats, which have mercury in them. Mercury in the air settles in lakes and rivers and builds up in fish. All fish have some mercury.

### What are PCBs?

PCBs are chemicals that were used as flame retardants until the late 1970s. PCBs can also be made when some types of plastics, like vinyl, are burned; or when products containing chlorine, like paper bleached with chlorine, are burned.

### What are the health effects of mercury and PCBs?

In adults, mercury can cause tingling, prickling, or numbness in hands and feet; they can damage the kidneys and nervous system, as well as cause changes in vision. In young children and babies, small amounts of mercury can harm their brains as they grow. Too much mercury can affect a child's behavior and cause learning problems later in life.

PCBs can cause cancer. Babies who are exposed to PCBs during a woman's pregnancy may be born small and have problems growing. PCBs can also cause learning problems.

### Can I clean and cook fish to remove mercury and PCBs?

Mercury is found in the flesh of the fish and cannot be removed by cleaning or cooking. However, PCBs and other contaminants can be reduced by removing fat and skin from the fish.



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