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# Eat fish often?



A Minnesota Guide  
to Eating Fish





**You already know that Minnesota is the *Land of 10,000 Lakes* and some excellent fishing. But how much do you know about the fish that you eat?**

Fish are an excellent food — they're a great source of protein, vitamins and minerals, and are low in saturated fat. Studies have shown that eating fish may help prevent heart disease in adults. **And most fish are healthy to eat.**

However, *any fish* (store-bought or sport-caught) could contain contaminants such as mercury or PCBs that could harm human health — especially the development of children and fetuses.

### What should you do?

There's no need to stop eating fish. **But if you wish to reduce your exposure to contaminants, you need to make wise choices about the kinds of fish you eat and how often you eat fish.** Begin by checking the Safe Eating Guidelines in this brochure to see if you and your family need to make changes. By following these healthy guidelines, you can reduce your exposure to the contaminants in fish, help reduce your health risks, and still get the benefits of eating fish.

### Safe Eating Guidelines: General Population

▶ For adults who eat fish all year long\*

Kind of fish	How often can you eat it?
<b>Fish caught in Minnesota:</b>	
Sunfish, crappie, yellow perch, bullheads	→ unlimited amount
Walleyes, northern pike, smallmouth bass, largemouth bass, channel catfish, flathead catfish, white sucker, drum, burbot, sauger, carp, white bass, rock bass, other species	→ 1 meal a week
<b>Commercial fish:</b>	
Limit the following species: shark, swordfish, tile fish, king mackerel	→ 1 meal a month

\* In general, adults who eat fish just during vacation or one season can eat fish twice as often as recommended in these guidelines.



## Questions & Answers About Fish Cont

### Q. What are the contaminants found in fish and where do they come from?

A. In Minnesota, **mercury** is the contaminant in fish that causes the most concern. Mercury can come from natural and man-made sources. Mercury in the air settles into lakes and rivers. It can then build up in fish.

There are also other contaminants in fish, including **PCBs**. PCBs are man-made substances that were banned in 1976. Levels have declined, but PCBs are still found in the environment.

### Q. How can mercury and PCBs in fish harm me?

A. In adults, mercury can damage your kidney and nervous system. It may cause tingling, prickling or numbness in hands and feet or changes in vision. Exposure to PCBs may cause cancer.

### Q. How can they harm children and babies?

A. Young children, developing fetuses and breast-fed babies are at most risk, because small amounts of mercury can damage a brain that is just starting to form or grow. Too much mercury may affect a child's behavior and lead to learning problems later in life. Babies who are exposed to PCBs during pregnancy may have lower birth weight, reduced head size and delayed physical development.

If you are pregnant, planning to be pregnant, breastfeeding or have young children, you and your children need to be more careful about the kinds of fish you eat and how often you eat fish. Contact the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) at the phone numbers or Web site listed on the back of this brochure for a copy of the brochure, "*An Expectant Mother's Guide to Eating Minnesota Fish.*"

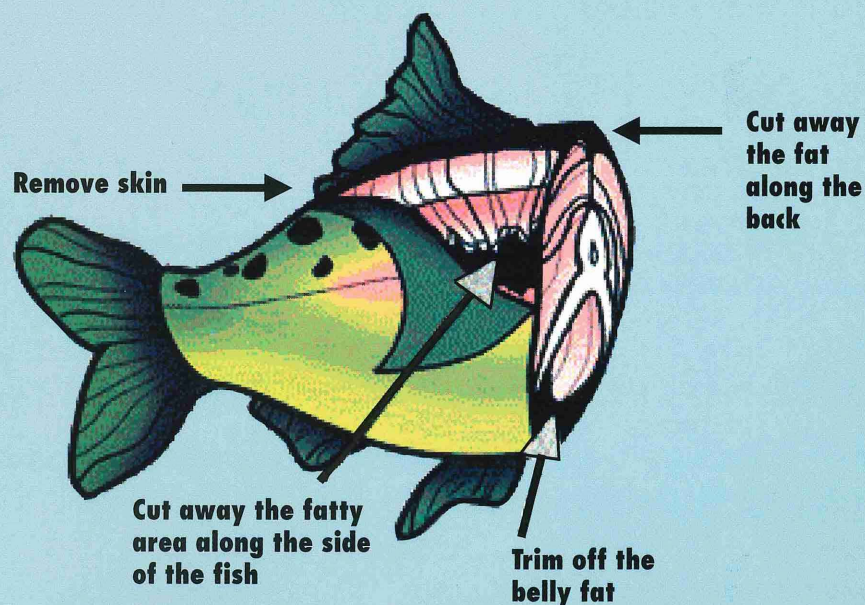


### Q. What can be done to reduce the amount of contaminants in fish?

A. Minnesota is one of the leading states in studying mercury contamination and developing programs to keep mercury out of the environment. For more information about preventing and reducing pollution, visit the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's Web site at [www.pca.mn.us](http://www.pca.mn.us) (search for mercury or PCBs), or call the agency at 651/296-6300 or 1-800-657-3864.

### Q. How can I clean and cook fish properly to deal with contaminants?

A. Mercury cannot be removed through cooking or cleaning — it gets into the flesh of the fish. However, you can reduce the amount of other contaminants like PCBs by removing fat when you clean and cook fish.



You can't see, smell or taste the mercury or PCBs in fish. That's why it's important to know which fish are safer than others to eat. Larger fish, older fish and fatty fish have higher amounts of contaminants. Fish that feed on other fish — such as walleyes, northern pike and bass — have the highest amounts of mercury in their meat.

### Remember the following tips when eating fish:

- 1 Eat smaller fish.
- 2 Eat more panfish (sunfish, crappies) and fewer predator fish (walleyes, northern pike, lake trout).
- 3 Trim skin and fat, especially belly fat. Also, eat fewer fatty fish such as carp, catfish and lake trout. PCBs build up in fish fat. For instructions on cleaning and cooking fish properly, see the question and answer section inside this brochure.

### Safe Eating Guidelines: Special Populations

For pregnant women, women who may become pregnant and children under age 15\*

#### Kind of fish

#### How often can you eat it?

##### 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 bass, largemouth bass, channel catfish, flathead catfish, white sucker, drum, burbot, sauger, carp, white bass, rock bass, other species	→ 1 meal a month
Walleyes longer than 20 inches, northern pike longer than 30 inches, muskellunge	→ Do not eat.

##### Commercial fish:

- Shark, swordfish, tile fish, king mackerel → Do not eat.
- Other commercial species, including canned tuna → See MDH's brochure, "An Expectant Mother's Guide to Eating Minnesota Fish," for guidelines.

\* There is no change in these guidelines for eating fish just during vacation or one season.

#### Special Note:

Please see the two tables on page 6 for exceptions to these guidelines. These exceptions are for eating fish from certain Minnesota waters known to have higher levels of contaminants. →



# Extra Precautions for Children, Pregnant Women and Women Planning a Pregnancy

## Important EXTRA Precautions for Special Populations ONLY

The extra precautions in the two tables on page 6 apply to you if:

- You are pregnant or are planning to be pregnant and you eat fish from the waters listed in the two tables, OR
- You have children under age 15 who eat fish from these waters.

**Table 1:** The lakes and rivers listed contain sunfish, crappie, perch or bullheads that should not be eaten more than once a month by people who meet the criteria listed above. Check the listing for each lake or river to see the specific species that you should not eat more than once a month.

**Table 2:** The lakes and rivers listed contain fish that should not be eaten by people who meet the criteria listed above. Check the listing for each lake or river to see the specific species and size that you should not eat.

For more information, please contact the Minnesota Department of Health (see the back of this brochure).

## Why Do Pregnant Women, Women Planning to Be Pregnant and Children Under 15 Need to Follow The Precautions in the Tables on Page 6 in Addition to the Guidelines on Page 4?

The lakes and rivers listed in the tables on page 6 have been tested and found to contain fish with higher than average levels of mercury or PCBs. Higher levels of mercury do *not* mean it isn't safe for most adults to eat fish from these waters. In fact, for most adults, there is no difference in the Safe Eating Guidelines for fish from these lakes and rivers.

However, pregnant women, women planning to be pregnant and children under age 15 are more sensitive to contaminants, and need to take the extra precautions listed in the two tables.

It may seem surprising, but fish from lakes in the northeastern portion of Minnesota generally have higher levels of mercury.

Although many of these lakes are relatively pristine, airborne contaminants still fall on them. Unfortunately, the sensitive natural water chemistry in these lakes efficiently turns non-harmful forms of mercury into a potentially harmful form. As a result, fish in these lakes accumulate more mercury.

PCBs are found mainly in Lake Superior and major rivers such as the Mississippi River.

Precautions in these two tables apply **ONLY** to members of the special populations listed on page 5. Be sure to check **BOTH** tables.

Table 1

### Do Not Eat the Listed Fish More Than Once a Month

Lake Name	DOW ID*	Kind of Fish
Agnes	21005300	Crappie
Artichoke	06000200	Crappie
Bass	58012800	Bullhead
Benton	41004300	Crappie
Big Marine	82005200	Bullhead, Crappie
Blandin	31053300	Bullhead
Bryant	27006700	Crappie
Bush	27004700	Bullhead, Crappie
Carver	82016600	Bullhead
Colby	69024900	Sunfish
Crane	69061600	Crappie
Day	69090600	Crappie
Dayton Hollow Res.	66082400	Sunfish
Dunns	47008200	Crappie
Eleventh Crow Wing	29003600	Bullhead
Fish	13006800	Sunfish, Bullhead
Grass	38063500	Crappie
Grove	61002300	Bullhead
Johnson	69011700	Crappie
Josephine	62005700	Bullhead
Lewis	33003200	Sunfish
Little Rock	05001300	Crappie
Little Sand	69073200	Sunfish
Long	34019200	Bullhead
Lower Comstock	69041202	Crappie
Minnewaska	61013000	Crappie
Minnie-Belle	47011900	Bullhead
Moose	69080600	Crappie
Nels	69008000	Sunfish
North Twin	69041900	Sunfish, Crappie
Oliver	76014600	Crappie
Orchard	19003100	Bullhead
Papoose	18020600	Crappie
Picket	69007900	Sunfish
Rainy	69069400	Crappie
Redwood	64005800	Crappie
Round	01007000	Crappie
Sand Point	69061700	Crappie
Silver	69066200	Sunfish, Crappie
Silver Island	38021900	Crappie
Staring	27007800	Sunfish
Steiger	10004500	Sunfish
Stump	04013001	Bullhead
Sucker	62002800	Bullhead
Trillium	11027000	Bullhead
Upper Comstock	69041201	Crappie
Victoria	21005400	Bullhead
Virginia	69066300	Sunfish
Weaver	27011700	Sunfish, Bullhead
White Iron	69000400	Crappie
Wolf	69014300	Crappie
Wynne	69043402	Sunfish

### RIVERS

Cedar River, above Austin	Bullhead
Mississippi River	
• Pool 5	Crappie
• Grand Rapids to Brainerd	Sunfish, Crappie, Bullhead
• Brainerd to Little Falls	Crappie
• Little Falls to Monticello	Sunfish, Bullhead
St. Louis River, near Cloquet	Bullhead

\* The DOW ID is the identification number for the lake as assigned by the Department of Natural Resources' Division of Waters.

Table 2

### Do Not Eat the Listed Fish

Lake Name	DOW ID*	Kind of Fish	Size
Astrid	69058900	Northern Pike	>15 in.
Big Bear	69011300	Northern Pike	>25 in.
Coe	69056200	Northern Pike	>25 in.
Colby	69024900	Walleyes	any size
Crab	69022000	Northern Pike	>20 in.
		Smallmouth Bass	any size
Crane	69061600	Sauger	any size
Cross	09006200	Walleyes	>15 in.
Dark	69079000	Northern Pike	>25 in.
Day	69090600	Walleyes	>15 in.
Devilfish	16002900	Lake Trout	>15 in.
Dovre	69060400	Northern Pike	>25 in.
Ek	69084300	Northern Pike	>25 in.
Esquagama	69056500	Northern Pike	>25 in.
		Walleyes	>15 in.
Eugene	69047300	Northern Pike	>20 in.
Gull	16063200	Northern Pike	>25 in.
Gun	69048700	Lake Trout	>25 in.
Hand	16023800	Northern Pike	>20 in.
		Walleyes	>15 in.
Hustler	69034300	Northern Pike	>25 in.
Little Trout	69068200	Lake Trout	>30 in.
Little Vermillion	69060800	Northern Pike	>25 in.
		Sauger	any size
Locator	69093600	Northern Pike	>25 in.
Loiten	69087200	Largemouth Bass	>15 in.
Loon	69047000	Northern Pike	>25 in.
Lower Comstock	69041202	Walleyes	any size
Moulton	01021200	Walleyes	any size
Namakan	69069300	Sauger	any size
Nigh	69045700	Walleyes	>15 in.
Orchard	19003100	Largemouth Bass	>15 in.
Oslo	69083800	Northern Pike	>20 in.
Parkers	27010700	Northern Pike	>25 in.
Pelican	56078600	Largemouth Bass	>15 in.
Picket	69007900	Northern Pike	>20 in.
Pike River Flowage	69058000	Northern Pike	>25 in.
Rainy	69069400	Sauger	any size
Red Rock	16079300	Northern Pike	>25 in.
Rose	16023000	Lake Trout	>30 in.
Round	27007100	Walleyes	>15 in.
Ryan	69083500	Northern Pike	>15 in.
Shannon	69092500	Walleyes	>15 in.
Snowball	31010800	Northern Pike	>25 in.
Spring	69076100	Northern Pike	>25 in.
Steiger	10004500	Northern Pike	>20 in.
Superior	16000100	Siscowet	>25 in.
Tooth	69075600	Northern Pike	>15 in.
Trout	31021600	Walleyes	>15 in.
Upper Comstock	69041201	Walleyes	>15 in.
Upper Cone	16041200	Northern Pike	>25 in.
Winchell	16035400	Lake Trout	>25 in.
Windy	38006800	Walleyes	any size
Wynne (Sabin)	69043400	Northern Pike	>20 in.
		Walleyes	>15 in.

### RIVERS

Big Fork River	Walleyes	>15 in.
Mississippi River		
• Grand Rapids to Brainerd	Bowfin	>25 in.
	White Sucker	>20 in.
St. Louis River		
• Cloquet to Fond du Lac Dam	Northern Pike	>15 in.
Sturgeon River	Walleyes	>15 in.





## For more information

### Call or visit us on the Web:

**Minnesota Department of Health**  
**[www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/fish/index.html](http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/fish/index.html)**

651/215-0950

1-800-657-3908

TDD: 651/215-0707

**Minnesota Department of Natural Resources**  
**[www.dnr.state.mn.us](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us)**

651/296-6157

1-800-MINNDNR

TTY: 651/296-5484 or 1-800-657-3929

#### Notes:

- The guidelines in this brochure are based on mercury and PCB levels measured in fish throughout Minnesota and levels of mercury found in commercial fish. Not all lakes and rivers in Minnesota have been tested for contaminants in fish.
- Specific advice for waters from which fish have been tested is available on the Minnesota Department of Health Web site or in DNR Lake Survey Reports.

**Minnesota Department of Health**  
**121 East Seventh Place, Suite 220**  
**P.O. Box 64975**  
**St. Paul, MN 55164-0975**

To request this document in another format, such as large print, Braille or cassette tape, call 651/215-0700; TDD 651/215-0707 or toll-free through the MN Relay Service, 1-800-627-3529 — ask for 651/215-0700.