

What is being done to reduce the amount of mercury in fish?

Mercury is a naturally-occurring element found in rocks, soils and sediments that is released into the environment by human and natural activities. The major source of mercury in New Hampshire is air emissions from the burning of coal to create electricity. When mercury gets into the air, it can be carried by precipitation into lakes and rivers, where it is converted into methyl mercury, and then builds up in fish. Older fish have higher levels of mercury than younger fish. Big fish that eat other fish have higher mercury levels.



New Hampshire has recently passed several laws that will help to keep mercury from entering our environment. One law requires the installation of pollution controls on coal-burning energy sources. Another requires pollution controls on municipal trash incinerators, which has reduced mercury emissions by over 90 percent. Lastly, mercury containing products have been banned from sale, and from disposal in landfills and incinerators.

Is mercury the only pollutant in fish we need to know about?

Other than mercury there are warnings about polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and dioxins, chemicals that can cause cancer and other health problems if too much builds up in your body.

Can we trim, clean or cook the fish to get rid of the pollutants?

Mercury gets into the flesh of the fish. It can't be cut away, cleaned or cooked out. By removing the skin and cutting away fatty areas, you may reduce other types of contaminants, such as PCBs or dioxin that can be in the fish.

For More Information

To find more information regarding the health effects of mercury or details on waterbody-specific advisories, please call the DES Environmental Health Program at (603) 271-1370, or go to www.des.nh.gov and search "fish."

For general questions about fishing regulations in New Hampshire, please call the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department at (603) 271-3211, or go to www.fishnh.com.



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NH Department of Environmental Services ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH PROGRAM



FISH FACTS

A Guide to New Hampshire's Fish Advisory



Is eating fish good for you?

Fish and shellfish are an important part of a healthy diet. They are a good source of low fat protein, vitamins, minerals, and contain omega-3 fatty acids, a key nutrient for brain development. However, nearly all fish and shellfish have traces of mercury and other possible contaminants. For most people the risk of ingesting mercury by eating fish and shellfish is not a problem. However, even small amounts of mercury can damage a brain starting to form or grow. That is why babies and young children are at most risk. Risks from mercury in fish and shellfish depend on the amount of fish and shellfish eaten and the levels of mercury in the fish and shellfish. You can eat fish and be healthy. The following guidelines will help.



New Hampshire Fish Consumption Guidelines

Freshwater Fish

For all freshwater fish caught in New Hampshire, except stocked trout, follow these fish consumption guidelines:

- Pregnant and nursing women, and women who may become pregnant, **can safely eat ONE**, 8-ounce meal of freshwater fish per month.
- Children under age 7 **can safely eat ONE**, 4-ounce meal of freshwater fish per month.
- All other adults and children age 7 and older **can safely eat FOUR**, 8-ounce meals of freshwater fish per month.
- When eating bass, pickerel, white perch or yellow perch, limit consumption to fish 12 inches or less in length while following the above guidelines.
- Stocked trout contains relatively low levels of mercury. For *rainbow* and *brown trout*, women of childbearing age and children can safely eat ONE meal per week; others can eat SIX meals per week. *Brook trout* could be either stocked or from a native population, and therefore should be consumed at the rate of the general freshwater advisory above.



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Waterbody Specific Advisories

Fish from several waterbodies in New Hampshire have been shown to have higher than average mercury concentrations. For the waterbodies identified below, **women of childbearing age and young children should not consume any fish**; others may consume TWO, 8-ounce meals per month.

- Ashuelot Pond, Washington
- Comerford and Moore Reservoirs on the Connecticut River
- Crystal Lake, Gilmanton
- Dubes Pond, Hooksett
- Jackman Reservoir, Hillsboro
- Mascoma Lake, Enfield
- May Pond, Washington
- Tower Hill Pond, Candia



In addition, **no fish should be consumed** from the Androscoggin River due to potential dioxin contamination.

Saltwater Fish, Shellfish and Commercially Available Fish

For all saltwater fish, shellfish and commercially available fish, please follow these consumption guidelines:



BEST CHOICES:

Catfish, Cod, Flounder, Haddock, Herring, Light Tuna (canned), Pollock, Sole, Salmon, Tilapia, Shellfish (Oysters, Shrimp, Crab, Clams, Scallops, Lobster)

- Pregnant and nursing women, women who may become pregnant, and young children **can safely eat TWO** meals per week. For all others, no limit as part of a balanced diet.

GOOD CHOICES:

Halibut, Red Snapper, Tuna Steak, White Tuna (canned)

- Pregnant and nursing women, women who may become pregnant, and young children **can safely eat ONE** meal per week. For all others, no limit as part of a balanced diet.

CAUTIONS:

King Mackerel, Swordfish, Shark, Tilefish

- Pregnant and nursing women, women who may become pregnant, and young children **should avoid consumption**. For all others, TWO meals per month.



Bluefish, Striped Bass

- Pregnant and nursing women, women who may become pregnant, and young children **should avoid consumption**. For all others, eat no more than ONE meal per month.

Lobster Tomalley (green substance in lobster)

- **Everyone avoid consumption**. All other parts of the lobster, no limits as part of a balanced diet.

All dietary sources of fish should be considered together. For example, a pregnant woman may have one meal of freshwater fish, but is advised not to consume any additional mercury-containing fish that month. **Remember:** "meal" sizes are 4 oz. for children under age 7 and 8 oz. for older children and adults.