

Finger Lakes Region

Health Advice on Eating Fish You Catch



Including Allegany, Broome, Cayuga, Chemung, Cortland, Livingston, Monroe, Onondaga, Ontario, Schuyler, Seneca, Steuben, Tioga, Tompkins, Wayne, and Yates 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



Fish from waters that are affected by industrial sources are more likely to be contaminated than fish from other waters. In the Finger Lakes Region for example, fish from Cayuga Lake are generally less contaminated than fish from Lake Ontario and Onondaga Lake. This is because Cayuga 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, such as from Onondaga Lake into the Seneca River. 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

People of childbearing age (under 50) and children under 15 (the sensitive population) are advised to limit the kinds of fish they eat and how often they eat them. People 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.

People beyond their childbearing years and those who do not bear children (the general population) may face fewer health risks from some chemicals. For that reason, the advice for the general population allows them to eat more kinds of sportfish and more often (see inside table).

What You Catch



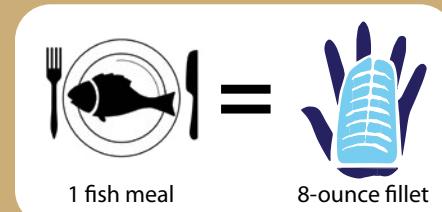
There is specific advice about limiting or not eating certain kinds of fish in some of this region's waterbodies (see inside table). Some fish have higher levels of chemicals than others. In general, smaller fish are less contaminated than larger, older fish of the same species. You can also choose to 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 Finger Lakes 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.)

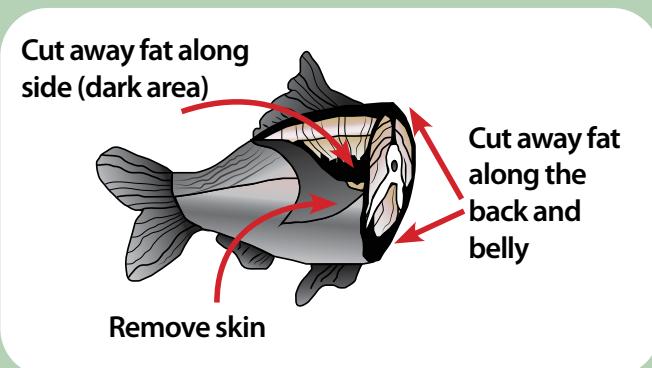
Tips for Healthier Eating

- 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 the sensitive population.
- 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, and white perch because these fish tend to have higher levels of these contaminants.

Tips to Avoid Mercury

- The main 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.

Where can the whole family eat the fish?

The Finger Lakes 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, such as:

- Cayuga Lake
- Hemlock Lake
- Honeoye Lake
- Otisco Lake
- Seneca Lake
- Skaneateles Lake

These lakes 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 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.

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. Some tributaries may be listed based on additional information about fish or waterbodies. 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.

Finger Lakes Region Specific Advisories



Finger Lakes Region Specific Advisories:

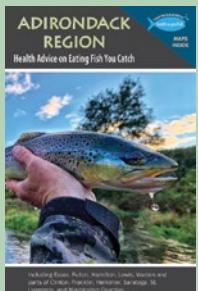
 Location & Tributaries (Chemical of Concern)	 Fish	 General Population	 Sensitive Population
All waters NOT listed (Finger Lakes Region)	All fish	Up to 4 meals/month	Up to 4 meals/month
Canadice Lake (PCBs)	Lake trout	Greater than 23", DON'T EAT; Less than 23", up to 1 meal/month	DON'T EAT
	Brown trout	Up to 1 meal/month	DON'T EAT
	All other fish	Up to 4 meals/month	DON'T EAT
Chenango River (Mercury)	Walleye	Greater than 22", up to 1 meal/month; Less than 22", up to 4 meals/month	DON'T EAT
	All other fish	Up to 4 meals/month	DON'T EAT
Coldbrook Creek (PCBs)	All fish	DON'T EAT	DON'T EAT
Irondequoit Bay (PCBs, Mirex, Dioxin)	Same advice as Lake Ontario		
Koppers Pond (PCBs)	Carp	Up to 1 meal/month	DON'T EAT
	All other fish	Up to 4 meals/month	DON'T EAT
Lake Ontario (PCBs, Mirex, Dioxin)	Brown bullhead ¹ , Rainbow smelt ¹ , Rock bass ¹ , White sucker ¹ , Yellow perch ¹	Up to 4 meals/month	Up to 4 meals/month
	Lake trout	Greater than 25", up to 1 meal/month; Less than 25", up to 4 meals/month	All sizes, up to 1 meal/month
	Carp	Up to 1 meal/month	DON'T EAT
	Channel catfish	Up to 1 meal/month	Up to 1 meal/month
	Brown trout	Greater than 20", up to 1 meal/month; Less than 20", up to 4 meals/month	All sizes, up to 1 meal/month
	All other fish	Up to 4 meals/month	Up to 1 meal/month

The sensitive population refers to people who may bear children under the age of 50 and children under 15. The general population refers to everyone else.

¹These 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.

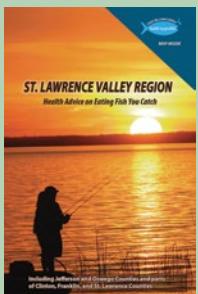
 Location & Tributaries (Chemical of Concern)	 Fish	 General Population	 Sensitive Population
Onondaga Lake (PCBs, Mercury, Dioxin)	Walleye	DON'T EAT	DON'T EAT
	Largemouth bass, Smallmouth bass	Greater than 15", DON'T EAT; Less than 15", up to 1 meal/month	DON'T EAT
	Carp, Channel catfish, White perch	DON'T EAT	DON'T EAT
	Brown bullhead, Pumpkinseed sunfish	Up to 4 meals/month	DON'T EAT
	All other fish (including Yellow perch)	Up to 1 meal/month	DON'T EAT
	Smallmouth bass, Walleye	Up to 1 meal/month	DON'T EAT
	Rainbow smelt ¹	Up to 4 meals/month	Up to 4 meals/month
	Rainbow trout, Brown trout	Up to 4 meals/month	Greater than 20", up to 1 meal/month; Less than 20", up to 4 meals/month
	Yellow perch	Up to 4 meals/month	Greater than 10", up to 1 meal/month; Less than 10", up to 4 meals/month
	All other fish	Up to 4 meals/month	Up to 1 meal/month
Rushford Lake (Mercury)	Walleye	Up to 1 meal/month	DON'T EAT
	All other fish	Up to 4 meals/month	DON'T EAT
Seneca River, downstream of Lock 24 at Baldwinsville (PCBs, Mercury, Dioxin)	Same advice as Onondaga Lake		
	Brown and Rainbow trout	Up to 1 meal/month	Up to 1 meal/month
	All other fish ¹	Up to 4 meals/month	Up to 4 meals/month
Skaneateles Creek, Skaneateles Lake Dam at Skaneateles to Seneca River (PCBs)	Walleye	Greater than 22", up to 1 meal/month; Less than 22", up to 4 meals/month	DON'T EAT
	All other fish	Up to 4 meals/month	DON'T EAT
Susquehanna River (Mercury)	Walleye	Greater than 22", up to 1 meal/month; Less than 22", up to 4 meals/month	DON'T EAT
	All other fish	Up to 4 meals/month	DON'T EAT

Other Free Publications Available:



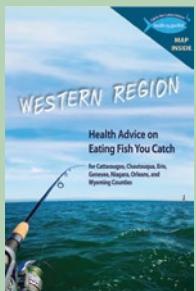
Adirondack Region Advice

Advice for Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Fulton, Hamilton, Herkimer, Lewis, Saratoga, St. Lawrence, Warren, and Washington counties



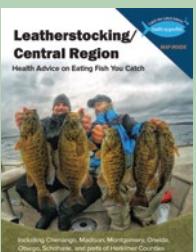
St. Lawrence Region Advice

Advice for Jefferson, Oswego, Clinton, Franklin, and St. Lawrence counties



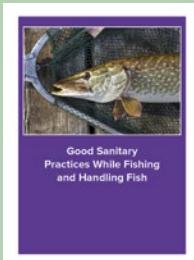
Western Region Advice

Advice for Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Erie, Genesee, Niagara, Orleans, and Wyoming counties



Leatherstocking Region Advice

Advice for Chenango, Madison, Montgomery, Oneida, Otsego, Schoharie, and Herkimer counties



Good Sanitary Practices While Fishing and Handling Fish

Information about fishing and cooking fish caught in waters with microorganism concerns

COMMON FISH OF THE FINGER LAKES 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



Rock bass



Smallmouth bass



Walleye



White perch



White sucker



Yellow perch

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 people, people 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
(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

DEC Region 7

(Broome, Cayuga, Cortland, Onondaga, Tioga, and Tompkins counties)

Cortland Sub-Office
(607) 753-3095
fwfish7@dec.ny.gov

New York State Fishing, cont.

DEC Region 8

(Chemung, Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, Schuyler, Seneca, Steuben, Wayne, and Yates counties)

Avon Office

(585) 226-2466
fwfish8@dec.ny.gov

DEC Region 9

(Allegany county)

Allegany Sub-Office

(716) 372-0645
fwfish9@dec.ny.gov

*Trout photo on page four
courtesy of Brian Walencik
(@trouttornado)*