

# Government Recommendations for Eating Lake Ontario and Store-Bought Fish

Eating fish is very good for your health. Unfortunately, some fish can be contaminated with chemicals that are unsafe for people to eat. This table is a summary of advice from the government on how much store-bought and locally-caught fish is safe to eat.

	Women who are pregnant, breastfeeding or may become pregnant; children under 15 years:	FDA/EPA advice on fish bought in stores or restaurants (commercial fish)	Men; women who are beyond childbearing years:	FDA/EPA advice on fish bought in stores or restaurants (commercial fish)
How often can I eat this fish?	DOH advice on fish from Lake Ontario and connecting waters (up to the first barrier to fish)		DOH advice on fish from Lake Ontario and connecting waters (up to the first barrier to fish)	
Unlimited	Women of childbearing age and children under 15 are advised to <b>EAT NO FISH</b> caught in Lake Ontario or connecting waters.		none	All store-bought fish is safe for men, and women who are beyond childbearing years. The advisory does recommend a diverse, well-balanced diet.
up to 2 meals/week		canned light tuna, catfish, pollock, salmon, shrimp	none	
up to 1 meal/week		white albacore tuna, tuna steaks	fish not listed below (sunfish/bluegills, yellow perch, bullheads, etc.)	
up to 1 meal/month		none	chinook salmon, coho salmon over 25", rainbow trout, white sucker, white perch (E of Point Breeze), lake trout smaller than 25", brown trout smaller than 20"	
<b>DO NOT EAT</b>		<b>shark, swordfish, king mackerel, tilefish</b>	<b>channel catfish, carp, lake trout over 25", brown trout over 20", white perch (W of Point Breeze)</b>	

\* DOH local fish advice defines a meal as an 8 oz. (half pound) portion; FDA/EPA commercial fish advice defines a meal as a 6 oz. portion

\*A barrier to fish is a structure in the water that fish can't swim past (for example a dam)

See **back for more information...**

## WHO WROTE THE ADVISORY?

Local fish consumption advisories are published by the New York State Department of Health. For more information, visit: <http://www.health.state.ny.us/environmental/outdoors/fish/fish.htm> or call: 1-800-458-1158

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recently joined together to write the federal advisory. This advisory refers only to mercury. For more information, visit <http://www.epa.gov/waterscience/fish/advice/factsheet.html>

## WHY IS THERE AN ADVISORY?

Almost all fish contains some mercury, but some more than others. Fish may also contain organic pollutants like PCBs, Dioxin and Mirex, which are the primary chemicals of concern for fish caught in Lake Ontario. The DOH Fish Advisory states that:

Studies of women and their children show a link between elevated levels of PCBs in their bodies and slight effects on their children's birth weight, short-term memory and learning ability. A study of older adults (49-86 years old) who ate fish containing PCBs suggested that higher PCB exposure is associated with decreased memory and learning. Other studies have suggested a link between increased PCB exposure and effects on the human reproductive system, including changes in sperm quality, time to pregnancy and menstrual cycles. These studies suggest that the effects were caused by PCBs, but other factors may have played a role too. Studies of workers exposed to PCBs raise concerns that these chemicals can cause cancer in people, but the information is not adequate to prove that this is the case.

## WHY IS THE ADVICE DIFFERENT FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN?

Toxins in fish are more dangerous for women of childbearing age and young children because they affect the body's development. However health benefits of fish play an important role in brain development and are very good for the heart. By following these guidelines, women and children can receive the benefits of eating fish and reduce their exposure to the harmful effects of mercury and other toxins. **The FDA/EPA Advisory recommends that commercial fish not be eaten in the same week that locally-caught fish is eaten.**

This handout was created in May 2009 by the University of Rochester Environmental Health Sciences Center Community Outreach and Education Core. Funding for this project is provided by the Great Lakes Protection Fund. If you have any questions or comments, please contact Valerie George, Program Manager, at (585) 275-3354 or [valerie\\_george@urmc.rochester.edu](mailto:valerie_george@urmc.rochester.edu)