DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Eat Fish Often?

A Minnesota Guide to Eating Fish

Fish are an important part of a nutritious and well-balanced diet, and part of many Minnesotan traditions and cultures, but any fish (locally caught or purchased) could have contaminants that can harm human health – especially children and fetuses. Follow these guidelines to lower your exposure to contaminants in fish.

Statewide Fish Consumption Guidelines

(All counties except Cook, Lake, and St. Louis counties)

Sensitive populations: children under age 15; girls, women, and people age 15 and older who may become pregnant, people who are pregnant, people who are breastfeeding or plan to breastfeed.

General populations: people not planning to become pregnant; boys and men age 15 and older.

*Species has length restrictions for sensitive populations, scan the QR code for more information.

Species	Serving Categories			Do Not Eat
	Weekly Serving Categories		Monthly Serving Category	
	Up to 4 total servings	Up to 1 total serving	Up to 1 total serving	
Bass				
Bullhead				
Catfish				
Cisco (Lake Herring)				
Crappie				
Inland Trout (Brook, Brown, Rainbow)				
Lake Trout				
Lake Whitefish				
Muskellunge (Muskie)				
Northern Pike*				
Sunfish				
Walleye*				
Yellow Perch				
Other MN Species Not Listed				

How to use the Guidelines:
First, scan the QR code to check the Waterbody-specific Fish Consumption Guidelines to see if there are more restrictive guidelines for fish species caught in Minnesota lakes and rivers or Lake Superior. Then, check the Statewide or Northeast Fish Consumption Guidelines for general guidelines for fish from Minnesota waters. Check the Purchased Fish Consumption Guidelines for guidelines for fish from the store or restaurant.

Statewide Fish Consumption Guidelines:
Select 1 "Weekly Serving" category every week and do not exceed the total servings listed during that week. *For example, if you are in the general population, you could choose 2 servings of MN-caught bullhead and 2 servings of MN-caught lake whitefish in a week, or you could choose 1 serving of MN-caught walleye in a week.* In addition to your weekly servings of fish, add any 1 serving category of fish during the month. *For example, if you are in the general population, you could have 4 servings of MN-caught cisco spread throughout the month in addition to your weekly meals, or you could add 1 serving of MN-caught walleye in addition to your weekly meals for that month.* See examples of meal plans at: Benefits of Eating Fish and Serving Sizes (https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/fish/guidance/eatingfish.html).
For the most up to date guidance, scan the QR code or visit: Waterbody-specific, Northeast, and Statewide Fish Consumption Guidelines (https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/fish/guidelines.html).

How clean a lake looks does not tell you how contaminated the fish are.

The most studied contaminants in Minnesota fish include mercury, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), and per-and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS).

Fish consumption guidance depends on:

- **Where you caught the fish.** Some waterbodies have waterbody-specific guidelines due to elevated levels of mercury, PCBs, or PFAS.
- **Who you are.** Some people are more sensitive than others to negative health effects from exposure to contaminants in fish. Also, be sure to consider who you are sharing your catch with.
- **The fish you catch.** The maximum number of servings recommended per week or month may vary among fish species caught in the same waterbody. Longer fish tend to be higher in mercury. Contaminant data are based on fish fillets. If you eat other parts of the fish, your exposure may differ.

Mercury is found in most fish — locally caught and purchased. Fish from lakes in northeastern Minnesota generally have more mercury than fish from other parts of the state. How much mercury is in fish depends on:

- **Species.** Some fish have more mercury than others because of what they eat and how long they live. Bass, northern pike, and walleye have higher levels than panfish.
- **Size.** Smaller fish generally have less mercury than larger, older fish of the same species.

PFAS are found at low levels in most fish tested. Higher levels have been found in fish from some waters in the Twin Cities Metro, Duluth, and other urban areas.

PCBs are highest in fatty fish such as carp, catfish, and lake trout from major rivers and Lake Superior. You can reduce the amount of PCBs by removing fat when you clean and cook fish. Trim skin and fat, especially belly fat, from those species when caught in rivers or Lake Superior.

Regularly check our website for the most up to date information:

Fish Consumption Guidance (https://www.health.state.mn.us/fish).

More Resources

LakeFinder (https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/lakefind/index.html).

Benefits of Eating Fish and Serving Sizes (https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/fish/guidance/eatingfish.html).

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May 2026
ID #53364