

An Expectant Mother's Guide to Eating Minnesota and Fond du Lac Fish



What you should know
if you are pregnant,
planning to be pregnant
or breastfeeding



Fish are an excellent low-fat food. Eat a variety of fish as part of your balanced food choices.

There are many reasons to enjoy a variety of fish often:

- Fish are a great source of protein, vitamins and minerals.
- The oils found in fish are important for unborn and breast-fed babies.
- Eating fish may play a role in the prevention of heart disease in adults.

However, fish may contain contaminants that could harm you or your family if you eat certain types of fish or eat fish too often.



If you are pregnant, planning to be pregnant, breastfeeding or have young children, read on to learn how to include fish as part of healthy, balanced food choices.

This brochure will help you:

- decide *which fish* to eat
- determine *how often* to eat fish
- identify fish high in contaminants

What kinds and how much fish should I eat?

The following guidelines are for women of child-bearing age and children under 15 years of age.



Follow these guidelines when eating fish:

For fish caught in Minnesota lakes and rivers:

Amount of each type of fish caught in Minnesota		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Panfish (sunfish & crappie) • Perch • Bullheads 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walleyes <i>shorter than 20 in.</i> • Northern pike <i>shorter than 30 in.</i> • All sizes of other species 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walleyes <i>longer than 20 in.</i> • Northern pike <i>longer than 30 in.</i> • Muskellunge
↓	↓	↓
1 meal a week	1 meal a month	Do not eat.

For commercial fish (bought in a store or eaten in a restaurant):

Amount of each type of fish			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fresh salmon • Canned salmon • Shellfish 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cod • Pollock • Haddock • Canned tuna (6 oz.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fresh tuna • Halibut • Orange roughy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shark • Swordfish • Tile fish • King mackerel
↓	↓	↓	↓
2-3 meals a week	1 meal a week	1 meal a month	Do not eat.

Include all sources of fish you eat when making choices.

For example: If you eat 6 ounces of canned tuna, wait one week before eating another meal of *any* type of fish. Or, if you eat one meal from an 18-inch walleye, *do not eat any other meals of fish for one month.*

Which fish are more likely to contain higher amounts of contaminants?

- larger fish
- older fish
- fish that feed on other fish (walleyes, northern pike, bass)
- fatty fish

More information

These are general guidelines based on mercury levels measured in fish throughout Minnesota, including some Fond du Lac Reservation lakes and the St. Louis River, and levels of mercury found in commercial fish. Specific meal advice is available for eating fish from lakes and rivers that have been tested.



For information on consumption guidelines for fish from specific Minnesota lakes and rivers, call the Fond du Lac Environmental Program at 218/878-8010.

How can contaminants in fish be harmful?

Fish advisories in Minnesota are based on levels of mercury and PCBs in the fish.



Mercury

Small amounts of mercury can damage a brain that is just starting to form or grow. That's why young children, unborn and breast-fed babies are at most risk. Too much mercury may affect a child's behavior and lead to learning problems later in life.

Mercury can also harm older children and adults, but it takes larger amounts. It may cause tingling, prickling or numbness in hands and feet or changes in vision.

PCBs

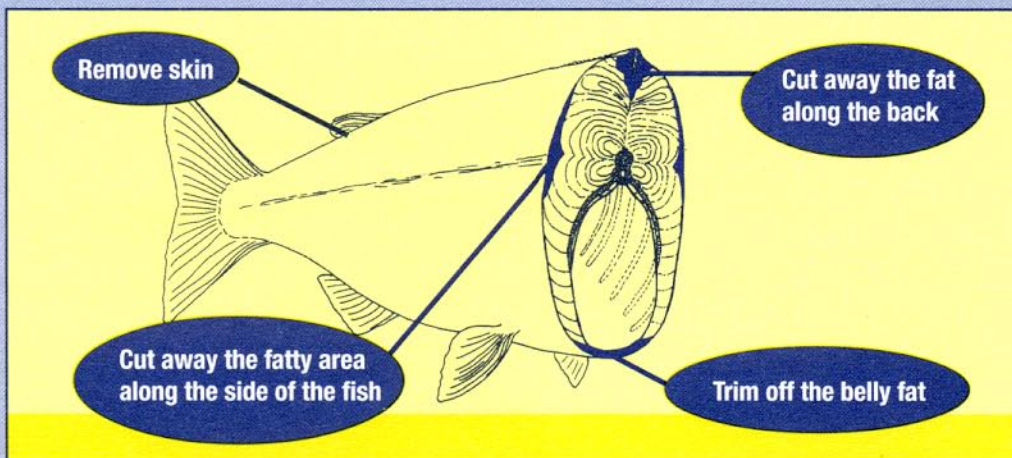
Babies who are exposed to PCBs during pregnancy may have lower birth weight, reduced head size and delayed physical development. Exposure to PCBs may also cause cancer.

By following the guidelines in this brochure, you can reduce your exposure to the contaminants in fish and help reduce your health risks.

Methods for cleaning and cooking fish:

Mercury cannot be removed through cooking or cleaning.

However, by removing fat when you clean and cook fish, you *can* help to reduce the amount of other contaminants like PCBs.



Do you eat...



- large walleyes, northern pike, or bass?
- fish more than once a week all year long?
- more than 6 ounces of canned tuna a week?
- swordfish or shark?

If so, you may need to change the *kinds of fish* you eat or *how often* you eat fish.

Your body can handle some exposure to contaminants. However, a developing child or unborn baby can handle less than an adult. If you are pregnant, planning to be pregnant or breastfeeding, you need to be more careful.

Should I just stop eating fish?

NO ...

just be sure to follow the guidelines in this brochure.



This brochure was produced as a collaborative effort between the Fond du Lac Environmental Program and the Minnesota Department of Health.

Fish drawing created by Bo Bellanger, 4th grade, Fond du Lac Little Black Bear Elementary School

Where do the contaminants in fish come from?

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. All fish have some mercury, including:

- fish caught in Minnesota lakes and rivers
- fish caught in waters in other states
- fish you buy in the store or eat in a restaurant
- fish from lakes in remote areas of northern Minnesota

PCBs are man-made substances that were once used in electrical transformers, carbonless papers, cutting oils and hydraulic fluids. PCBs were banned in 1976. Although levels have declined, PCBs are still found in the environment. They are found mainly in the Great Lakes and major rivers such as the Mississippi River.

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