

Eat Healthy Fish

Why fish are a healthy choice? Fish are part of a healthy, balanced diet. They are a low calorie source of protein and are low in saturated fats.

Pollutant risks: In the rivers and coastal waters of New York City, mercury, PCBs and other chemicals have been found in some species of fish at concentrations that may be harmful to human health. High concentrations of these contaminants can cause birth defects, cancer or other illnesses. Both mercury and PCBs linger in the body and build up over time. When contaminant levels are unsafe, the State Department of Health issues advisories to limit consumption of certain fish species in some rivers, bays and marine waters.

Mercury: All fish contain some mercury. You can't see it, smell it, or taste it. Special tests can measure it. Larger, older fish tend to have more mercury than younger fish. Fish that eat other fish have the most mercury in their flesh. In the ocean, these are sharks and swordfish. In lakes, rivers and reservoirs, bass generally have the highest levels of mercury.

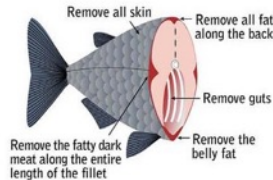
PCBs: PCBs, dioxins and other contaminants are toxic mixtures of chemicals that break down very slowly in the environment. They accumulate in the fatty parts of fish that eat smaller fish. Bottom feeding fish have the highest levels of PCBs.

Who is at risk? Anyone eating fish with mercury and PCBs faces potential health problems, including cancer, liver disease and other problems with the immune and endocrine system. Women who may become pregnant, nursing mothers, and children are especially vulnerable to the effects of environmental toxins that accumulate in fish. For this reason, women of childbearing age and children under age 15 should not eat any fish caught in these local waters: Upper Bay of New York Harbor North of the Verrazano Bridge, Hudson River, East River, Harlem River, Bronx River, Newark Bay, Raritan Bay, Kill van Kull, and Arthur Kill.

Cooking Tips

Proper trimming and cooking can reduce the PCB content, but not mercury content.

- Eat smaller fish rather than large predator fish.
- Eat smaller portions of fish that may be contaminated.
- Do not buy fish directly from anglers on piers.
- Choose fish lower in mercury like trout, wild salmon, tilapia, cod, sole, sardines, shrimp, and other shellfish.
- Eat only the skin-off fillet of the fish.



- Because toxins concentrate in fat, trimming and cooking fish so the fats drip off can reduce PCB content (but not mercury).
- Remove and throw away the head, skin, guts, kidneys, liver and fatty parts before cooking.
- Broil, bake or grill fish, discarding cooking juices. Deep-frying and pan-frying are not recommended.
- When preparing blue crab, never eat the crab "mustard."

These tips are provided by Going Coastal, Inc., an outreach and education project supported by an Environmental Justice grant from the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation. For more information about fishing in New York Harbor and to learn about ways you can safely enjoy the New York City waterfront, visit us online.

www.goingcoastal.org

For NYS Fish Regulation Guidelines, visit <http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/7736.html>

Protect your Families Health; follow the NYS Fish Consumption Advisories
www.nyhealth.gov/fish

