

# Eat fish often?



**A Fond du Lac Guide to Eating Fish**



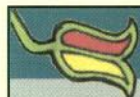
# How much do you know about the fish that you eat?

Fish are an excellent food — they're a great source of protein, vitamins and minerals, and are low in saturated fat. Studies have shown that eating fish may help prevent heart disease in adults. And most fish are healthy to eat.

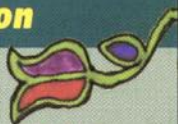
However, *any fish* (store-bought or sport-caught) could contain contaminants such as mercury or PCBs that could harm human health — especially the development of children and fetuses.

## What should you do?

There's no need to stop eating fish. But if you wish to reduce your exposure to contaminants, you need to make wise choices about the *kinds of fish* you eat and *how often* you eat fish. Begin by checking the Safe Eating Guidelines in this brochure to see if you and your family need to make changes. By following these healthy guidelines, you can reduce your exposure to the contaminants in fish, help reduce your health risks, and still get the benefits of eating fish.



## Safe Eating Guidelines: General Population



For adults who eat fish all year long\*

### Kind of fish

### How often can you eat it?

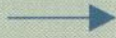
#### Fish caught in Minnesota:

Panfish (sunfish, crappie), perch, bullheads



unlimited amount

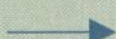
All sizes of other species



1 meal a week

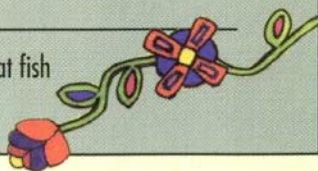
#### Commercial fish:

Limit the following species: shark, swordfish, tile fish, king mackerel



1 meal a month

\* In general, adults who eat fish just during vacation or one season can eat fish twice as often as recommended in these guidelines.





# Questions & Answers

## **Q. What are the contaminants found in fish and where do they come from?**

A. In Minnesota, mercury is the contaminant in fish that causes the most concern. 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.

There are also other contaminants in fish, including PCBs. PCBs are man-made substances that were banned in 1976. Levels have declined, but PCBs are still found in the environment.

## **Q. How can mercury in fish harm me?**

A. In adults, mercury can damage your kidney and nervous system. It may cause tingling, prickling or numbness in hands and feet or changes in vision.

## **Q. How can mercury harm children and babies?**

A. Young children, developing fetuses and breast-fed babies are at most risk, because small amounts of mercury can damage a brain that is just starting to form or grow. Too much mercury may affect a child's behavior and lead to learning problems later in life.

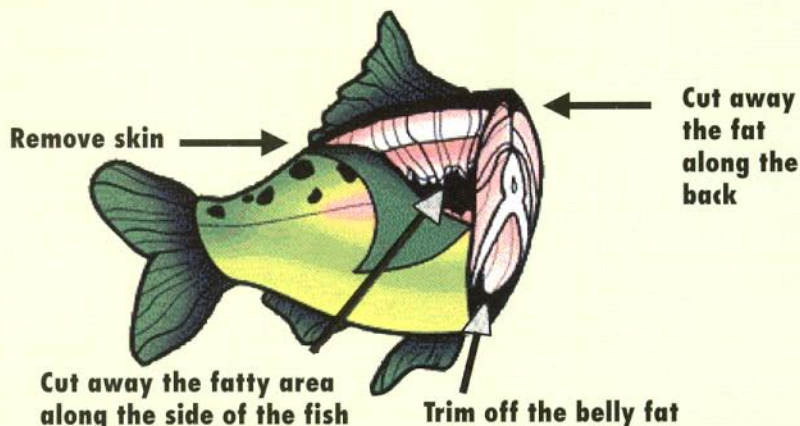
If you are pregnant, planning to be pregnant, breastfeeding or have young children, you and your children need to be more careful about the kinds of fish you eat and how often you eat fish. Contact the Fond du Lac Environmental Program at 218/878-8010 for a copy of the brochure, "*An Expectant Mother's Guide to Eating Minnesota and Fond du Lac Fish.*"

## **Q. What can be done to reduce the amount of contaminants in fish?**

A. Minnesota is one of the leading states in studying mercury contamination and developing programs to keep mercury out of the environment. For more information about preventing and reducing pollution, visit the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's Web site at [www.pca.mn.us](http://www.pca.mn.us) (search for mercury or PCBs), or call the agency at 651/296-6300 or 1-800-657-3864. For information about Fond du Lac waters, call the Fond du Lac Environmental Program at 218/878-8010.

**Q. How can I clean and cook fish properly to deal with contaminants?**

A. Mercury cannot be removed through cooking or cleaning — it gets into the flesh of the fish. However, you can reduce the amount of other contaminants like PCBs by removing fat when you clean and cook fish.



**Q. Which waters in Fond du Lac have been tested?**

Lake or River	Species Tested
Joe Martin	Black crappie
Lost	Walleye
Pat Martin	Black crappie
Perch	Northern pike
Simian	Northern pike
Sofie	Bluegill
West Twin	Walleye
St. Louis River	Northern pike
	Channel catfish
	Northern pike
	Smallmouth bass
	Walleye



**Notes:**

- The guidelines in this brochure are based on mercury and PCB levels measured in fish from waters throughout Minnesota, including the reservation lakes listed at left and the St. Louis River along the reservation border.
- To obtain specific advice for Minnesota waters that have been tested by the state, please visit the Minnesota Department of Health or Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Web sites listed on the back of this brochure. You may also call the Minnesota DNR and ask to be mailed a DNR Lake Survey Report.



# Tips for Reducing Contaminants

You can't see, smell or taste the mercury or PCBs in fish. That's why it's important to know which fish are safer than others to eat. Larger fish, older fish and fatty fish have higher amounts of contaminants. Fish that feed on other fish — such as walleyes, northern pike and bass — have the highest amounts of mercury in their meat.

## Remember the following tips when eating fish:

- 1** Eat smaller fish.
- 2** Eat more panfish (sunfish, crappies) and fewer predator fish (walleyes, northern pike, lake trout).
- 3** Trim skin and fat, especially belly fat. Also, eat fewer fatty fish such as carp, catfish and lake trout. PCBs build up in fish fat. For instructions on cleaning and cooking fish properly, see the question and answer section inside this brochure.

## Safe Eating Guidelines: Special Populations

For pregnant women, women who may become pregnant and children under age 15\*

### Kind of fish

### How often can you eat it?

#### Fish caught in Minnesota:

Panfish (sunfish, crappie), perch, bullheads

→ 1 meal a week

Walleyes shorter than 20 inches, northern pike shorter than 30 inches, all sizes of other species

→ 1 meal a month

Walleyes longer than 20 inches, northern pike longer than 30 inches, muskellunge

→ **Do not eat.**

#### Commercial fish:

- Shark, swordfish, tile fish, king mackerel
- Other commercial species, including canned tuna

→ **Do not eat.**

→ See the brochure,

*"An Expectant Mother's Guide to Eating Minnesota and Fond du Lac Fish,"* for guidelines.

#### Special Note:

Fish from certain Minnesota lakes and rivers are known to have higher levels of contaminants. Please contact the Fond du Lac Environmental Program at 218/878-8010 for exceptions to these guidelines.

\* There is no change in these guidelines for eating fish just during vacation or one season.



## For More Information

# WWW.

Call or visit us on the Web:



**Fond du Lac Environmental Program**

**[www.fdlrez.com](http://www.fdlrez.com)**

218/878-8010

1720 Big Lake Road  
Cloquet, MN 55720



**Fond du Lac  
Environmental  
Program**



**Minnesota Department of Health**

**[www.health.state.mn.us](http://www.health.state.mn.us)**

651/215-0950

1-800-657-3908

TDD: 651/215-0707

121 East Seventh Place, Suite 220

P.O. Box 64975

St. Paul, MN 55164-0975

**Minnesota Department of Natural Resources**

**[www.dnr.state.mn.us](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us)**

651/296-6157

1-800-MINNDNR

TTY: 651/296-5484 or 1-800-657-3929

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

Artwork by Gordon L. Northbird, Jr.

Although the information in this document has been funded wholly or in part by the United States Environmental Protection Agency under Grant X00562101-1 to the Minnesota Department of Health, it has not been subjected to the agency's publication review process and therefore, may not reflect the views of the agency and no official endorsement should be inferred.