

Fish Consumption Advisory

Sportfishing is an important part of Canadian culture and can be a fun and healthy outdoor experience for people of all ages. Fish is an excellent source of lean protein, and provides essential nutrients like omega-3 fatty acids, zinc, iron, selenium and vitamins A, C and D. Despite the health benefits that are associated with eating fish, in some locations in Alberta, various species of fish may be exposed to mercury and other contaminants that when consumed in high levels can impact human health.

Methylmercury is the most toxic form of mercury. It is formed through natural biological processes in the water and sediment from other forms of mercury that are found in the environment. Fish absorb mercury directly through their gills or through the consumption of prey that contain mercury. Larger, older fish will generally contain higher levels of mercury, as will predatory fish like pike, walleye and burbot, which tend to show the highest concentrations. Dioxins and Furans come from man-made sources. They accumulate in fat tissues and are persistent in fish, particularly in large predatory fish.

The Government of Alberta has been issuing and reviewing fish consumption advisories for fish caught from local water bodies in Alberta since the 1990's. The Chief Medical Officer of Health in Alberta Health and Wellness is responsible for issuing food consumption advisories. Other government departments are involved in various activities related to issuing the advisories such as sample collection, provision of data and information to Alberta Health and Wellness and participating in the public health advisory process.

Fish consumption advisories inform the public about any potential health hazards they may encounter when eating specific types of fish. The advisory helps local fish consumers make informed decisions about what is a safe amount of fish to eat.

Fish consumption advisories apply to local subsistence consumers, recreational anglers and residents who eat fish caught from local water bodies. Different fish consumption limits are provided to different age consumer groups, particularly women of child-bearing age and young children who are more susceptible to potential health risks posed by consuming high levels of environmental contaminants. Also, fish consumption advisories are species specific, fish size specific and location specific.

For a list of waters where Fish Consumption Advisories have been issued please visit mywildalberta.com and search fish consumption advisory. Please carefully check tables about different recommended amounts, consumer groups, age groups, fish species, fish size, and water bodies.

Please note that not all waters in Alberta have been tested and studies indicate that older, larger predatory fish such as pike, walleye and burbot may have elevated levels of contaminants. Caution should be used when consuming these fish.



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