



Eating Sport Fish

1998-1999 Health Advice for the Capital District, Hudson River, New York Harbor, Fresh Waters of Long Island and Marine Waters of New York



Fishing New York's abundant waters is a popular sport. Anglers catch a wide variety of delicious fish and many eat the fish they catch. However, some species in certain waters contain chemicals that may be harmful to health, even when the fish look healthy and the water looks clean.

What should you consider when deciding whether or not to eat the fish you catch? The New York State Department of Health issues health advisories for

people who eat fish from waters where chemical contaminants may be a problem. You can make an informed decision about the potential risks from eating contaminated sport fish by using this publication. More detailed advice can be found in the *New York State Fishing Regulations Guide* (available where fishing licenses are sold) or in a booklet which can be requested from the Department of Health at 1-800-458-1158, ext. 6409.

Why is This Advice Important to Me?

Chemicals are found in some fish at levels that may be harmful to your health. Some chemicals build up in your body over time or affect organs, such as your kidneys or liver.

Women of childbearing age may be at special risk from eating contaminated fish. During pregnancy and when breast-feeding, some chemicals (such as PCBs, dioxins and mercury) may be passed on to your baby. This can harm the baby's growth and development. **Children** under the age of 15 should not eat contaminated fish because they are still growing and developing, and are at special risk from contaminants.

How Much Fish Can I Eat?

Generally, no one should eat more than one meal of fish per week from any of the state's fresh waters. Some waters in New York have even stricter health advisories.

The following guidelines are a shortened version of the complete health advisories for the Capital District, Hudson River, New York Harbor, the Fresh Waters of Long Island and Marine Waters of New York. For more detailed advice about eating fish, please consult *Health Advisories: Chemicals in Sport Fish and Game* available from the Health Department by calling 1-800-458-1158, ext. 6409.

Which Fish are Safer (Less Contaminated) to Eat?

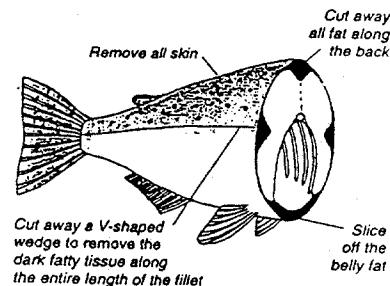
You can limit your exposure to chemical contaminants in these ways:

- Choose fish not mentioned in the advisory—those fish generally have lower contaminant levels.
- Choose smaller fish (of legal size) to eat. Smaller fish are younger and generally have lower contaminant levels than larger, older fish.
- Fish from Long Island South Shore waters and eastern Long Island Sound waters generally have lower contaminant levels than fish from the Hudson River and the Upper Bay of New York Harbor.
- See other side for more restrictive health advisories.

Can I Clean and Cook My Fish to Reduce Contaminants?

You can reduce your exposure to chemical contaminants by the way you prepare the fish. Many chemicals concentrate in the fatty parts of fish. By cleaning or cooking fish to reduce fat, you can also reduce the amount of contaminants you eat.

- Remove the skin and trim all the fat from the areas shown below.
- Don't pan-fry or deep-fry. Broil, bake, poach or boil your fish so the fatty juices drip away.
- Don't consume cooking liquids.



Catch and Release

Anglers who want to continue to enjoy the fun of fishing, but who also wish to lessen the potential risks associated with eating contaminated sport fish, should consider catch and release. Catch and release also minimizes your impact on local fisheries. When practicing catch and release, follow these simple guidelines:

- Release fish quickly—while still in the water, if possible; have necessary tools (needlenose pliers) close at hand.
- When a fish is deeply hooked, do not tear out the hook—cut the leader or the hook to give the fish a nearly fourfold increase in chances of survival.
- Avoid playing fish to exhaustion, particularly if water temperatures are very high.

For more detailed information about catch and release, consult the *New York State Fishing Regulations Guide* available wherever fishing licenses are sold.



Prepared By:
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New York State Department of Health



Hudson River

Hudson River between Bakers Falls (in Hudson Falls) and the Federal Dam at Troy:

- Catch and release fishing only—these regulations apply to the portion of the Hudson River noted above and all tributaries upstream to the first barrier impassable by fish. All fish caught must be immediately returned to the water unharmed.

***General Health Advisory**

For the following waters, the general health advice recommendation is:

- Women of childbearing age and children under 15 should eat NO FISH from the waters listed below.
- Other people should follow the recommendations provided for each water listed below and should eat no more than one meal per week of any fish species not listed.

Hoosic River

- Eat no more than one meal per month of brown or rainbow trout.

Kinderhook Lake

- Eat no more than one meal per month of American eel.

Nassau Lake

- Eat no fish.

Valatie Kill between County Route 18 and Nassau Lake

- Eat no fish.

Hudson River and All Tributaries to the First Barrier Impassable by Fish:

Niagara-Mohawk Boat Launch (above Sherman Island Dam) downstream to Sherman Island Dam:

- Eat no more than one meal per month for all species of fish.

Sherman Island Dam downstream to feeder dam at South Glens Falls.

- Eat no more than one meal per month of carp.

Hudson Falls to Federal Dam at Troy

- Eat no fish (Illegal to keep fish).

Federal Dam at Troy south to bridge at Catskill

- Eat no fish except American shad.

Hudson River South of Catskill, Arthur Kill, Kill Van Kull and Upper Bay of New York Harbor (North of Verrazano Narrows Bridge)

- Eat no more than one meal per month of American eel, Atlantic needlefish, bluefish, carp, goldfish, large-mouth and smallmouth bass, rainbow smelt, striped bass, walleye, white catfish and white perch and eat no more than one meal per week of other fish species.
- Eat no more than six blue crabs per week and don't consume the hepatopancreas (mustard, tomalley, liver) or cooking liquid.

Saw Mill River (Westchester Co.)

- Eat no more than one meal per month of American eel.

Sheldrake River (Westchester Co.)

- Eat no American eel.
- Eat no more than one meal per month of goldfish.

Harlem River and East River (to the Throgs Neck Bridge)

- Eat no more than one meal per month of Atlantic needlefish, bluefish, striped bass and white perch.
- Eat no American eel.

Inland Waters of Long Island

Freeport Reservoir and Grant Park Pond (Nassau Co.), Belmont Lake and Lake Capri (Suffolk Co.)

- Eat no more than one meal per month of carp.

Hall's Pond (Nassau Co.) and Spring Pond-Middle Island (Suffolk Co.)

- Eat no carp or goldfish.

Loft's and Whitney Park ponds (Nassau Co.)

- Eat no more than one meal per month of carp or goldfish.

Ridder's Pond (Nassau Co.)

- Eat no goldfish.

St. James Pond (Suffolk Co.)

- Eat no more than one meal per month of all species.

Smith Pond-Roosevelt Park (Nassau Co.)

- Eat no American eel.
- Eat no more than one meal per month of carp and goldfish.

Smith Pond at Rockville Center and Upper Massapequa Reservoir (Nassau Co.)

- Eat no more than one meal per month of white perch.

Marine Waters:

Lower Bay of New York Harbor, Jamaica Bay, Long Island Sound, Peconic and Gardiners bays, Block Island Sound and Long Island South Shore Waters

- The general health advisory does not apply to these waters. However, some species of fish and shellfish do contain chemical contaminants at levels that may cause adverse human health effects. For those species, people should follow the advice given below:
- Women of childbearing age and children under the age of 15 should eat no striped bass from New York Harbor and Long Island Sound west of Wading River. Other people should eat no more than one meal per month of striped bass from these waters.
- Everyone should eat no more than one meal per week of striped bass from Long Island Sound east of Wading River, Peconic and Gardiners Bays, Block Island Sound, Long Island South Shore waters and Jamaica Bay.
- Eat no more than one meal per week of American eel and bluefish from any of these waters.
- Do not eat the hepatopancreas (mustard, tomalley, liver) of American lobster and blue crab. Discard all cooking liquids.



***For further information**

This summary is only a quick reference. For more complete information, consult *Health Advisories: Chemicals in Sport Fish and Game* published annually by the New York State Department of Health. This publication provides advisories on eating fish from all New York waters, describes the contaminants and reasons for the advisories and tells how to space meals so exposure to chemicals is not excessive. If you eat fish from other New York waters, call the Department of Health toll-free at 1-800-458-1158, ext. 6409 for a free copy of the advisory or to speak with someone about any questions you may have. The full advisories are also available on the internet: www.health.state.ny.us or can be requested by e-mail: BTSA@health.state.ny.us.