

Government Recommendations for Eating Lake Ontario and Store-Bought Fish

Eating fish is very good for your health. Unfortunately, some fish can be contaminated with chemicals that are unsafe for people to eat. This table is a summary of advice from the government on how much store-bought and locally-caught fish is safe to eat.

Unlimited

Women of childbearing age
and children under 15 are

Local fish consumption advisories are published by the New York State Department of Health. For more information, visit: <http://www.health.state.ny.us/environmental/outdoors/fish/fish.htm> or call: 1-800-458-1158

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recently joined together to write the federal advisory. This advisory refers only to mercury. For more information, visit <http://www.epa.gov/waterscience/fish/advice/factsheet.html>

Almost all fish contains some mercury, but some more than others. Fish may also contain organic pollutants like PCBs, Dioxin and Mirex, which are the primary chemicals of concern for fish caught in Lake Ontario. The DOH Fish Advisory states that:

Studies of women and their children show a link between elevated levels of PCBs in their bodies and slight effects on their children's birth weight, short-term memory and learning ability. A study of older adults (49-86 years old) who ate fish containing PCBs suggested that higher PCB exposure is associated with decreased memory and learning. Other studies have suggested a link between increased PCB exposure and effects on the human reproductive system, including changes in sperm quality, time to pregnancy and menstrual cycles. These studies suggest that the effects were caused by PCBs, but other factors may have played a role too. Studies of workers exposed to PCBs raise concerns that these chemicals can cause cancer in people, but the information is not adequate to prove that this is the case.