

# Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment



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## OEHHA Issues Updated Fish Advisory for San Francisco Bay

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SACRAMENTO – The Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) has released an updated health advisory and safe eating guidelines for fish and shellfish caught from San Francisco Bay.

Bay Area anglers should eat a variety of different kinds of fish, avoid fish known to have high amounts of mercury and other contaminants, and properly prepare and cook fish, OEHHA's guidelines state. The advisory also provides special advice for women of childbearing age and children.

“OEHHA's guidelines and advisory should help anglers choose the safest kinds of fish for their families to eat and the safest ways to prepare fish they catch in the San Francisco Bay,” said Dr. George Alexeeff, Acting OEHHA Director. OEHHA is part of the California Environmental Protection Agency.

The advisory and guidelines replace an earlier 1994 advisory, and draw on over a decade of more recent data showing San Francisco Bay fish contain mercury and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs). They also incorporate nutrition science showing that fish provide dietary protein and essential nutrients, including Omega-3 fatty acids that promote heart health.

Some kinds of fish have more mercury and PCBs than others: Sharks had the highest levels of mercury, and shiner perch had the most PCBs. High exposures to methylmercury (the form of mercury prevalent in fish) can affect the nervous system and harm learning ability, language skills and memory. PCBs are common contaminants known to build up in fish. They have been found to cause cancer in animals and also cause health problems in young children and adults.

OEHHA **recommends avoiding shiner perch and other surfperch species** from San Francisco Bay. Women ages 18-45 and children 1-17, who are most sensitive to mercury, should also avoid eating San Francisco Bay sharks, striped bass, or white sturgeon. In addition, because of heavy contamination by PCBs and the pesticide dieldrin, OEHHA recommends that no one eat any fish or shellfish from the Lauritzen Channel in Richmond Inner Harbor.

**California Environmental Protection Agency**

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Despite these limitations, pregnant women can safely eat other species of fish.

Generally, women of childbearing age, pregnant women, and children 1–17 years may eat up to **2 servings per week** of brown rockfish, Chinook (king) salmon, jacksmelt, or red rock crab; or **1 serving per week** of California halibut or white croaker.

Women over age 45 and men may eat more fish: **up to 7 servings per week** of Chinook (king) salmon; or **up to 5 servings per week** of brown rockfish or red rock crab; or **up to 2 servings per week** of jacksmelt, California halibut or striped bass; or **up to 1 serving per week** of white croaker, white sturgeon, brown smoothhound, or leopard shark.

The serving recommendations are not meant to be combined or added together. For example, individuals who eat a serving of fish from the one-serving-per-week category should not eat any more fish until the following week. Because salmon, striped bass, and white sturgeon migrate between the bay and the Delta, the updated advisory also applies to these species caught in the Delta including the Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers.

To serve fish in the healthiest way possible and to avoid contamination, the guidelines recommend taking the following steps:

- Eat only the fillet portion.
- Skin and trim all visible fat.
- Thoroughly cook before eating, preferably using a method that allows the juices to drain away.
- When eating crabs, eat only the meat. Avoid the internal organs.

To help reduce exposure to chemicals in San Francisco Bay fish, OEHHA is collaborating with the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) on the San Francisco Bay Fish Project. Under this project, CDPH and OEHHA will be supporting community-based projects to raise public awareness of the OEHHA advisory and fish contamination issues in the bay.

The guidelines, a fact sheet, and the fish advisory report may be viewed at [www.oehha.ca.gov](http://www.oehha.ca.gov)

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