



## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE STATEWIDE ADVISORY FOR EATING FISH FROM CALIFORNIA COASTAL LOCATIONS WITHOUT SITE-SPECIFIC ADVICE**

Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA)  
California Environmental Protection Agency

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### **Why did the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) develop an advisory for eating fish from California coastal locations that do not have site-specific advice?**

OEHHA developed an advisory for coastal waters of California, excluding enclosed bays and coastal areas with existing advice, because of mercury and PCBs found in the fish caught from these areas. Coastal state waters are defined as extending three nautical miles from the mean low tide line and three nautical miles beyond the outermost islands (e.g., the Channel or Farallon islands), including all waters between those islands and the coast, from the Oregon/California border to the United States/Mexico border. This advisory is part of an ongoing effort by OEHHA to provide safe-eating advice for fish in different California water bodies.

### **Why should I eat fish?**

- Low-contaminant fish are an important part of a healthy, well-balanced diet. The American Heart Association recommends eating at least two servings of fish each week.
- Fish are a good source of protein, vitamins, and are a primary dietary source of heart-healthy omega-3 fatty acids. Eating low-contaminant fish while pregnant may help the baby's brain develop.

### **Which chemicals are of concern for people eating fish from California coastal locations?**

- Mercury
  - Mercury is a metal that comes from natural sources, mining, and air fallout from burning coal and other fuels.
  - Too much methylmercury, the form of mercury found in fish, can harm the brain, especially in fetuses, babies, and children. Mothers can pass methylmercury to their babies during pregnancy.
  - Because fetuses, babies, and children are especially sensitive to mercury, OEHHA has one set of advice for the amount of mercury-containing fish that women age 18-45 and children 1-17 should eat,

and another set of advice for women 46 years and older and men 18 years and older.

- Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs)
  - PCBs are man-made industrial chemicals. While banned in the 1970s, they persist for many years in the environment and are still found in the air and water from spills, leaks, and improper disposal.
  - High levels of PCBs can cause health problems. Some forms of PCBs have been shown to cause cancer in long-term studies.
  - PCBs can build up to very high levels in the skin, fat, and some internal organs of fish. That is why OEHHA recommends eating only skinless fillet (meat) of fish.

### **How did OEHHA determine the consumption guidelines for fish from California coastal locations?**

- OEHHA compared chemical levels in fish caught from California coastal locations to levels that are considered safe for human consumption.
- When reasonable, related fish species were grouped to simplify risk communication.
- OEHHA's consumption guidelines balance the risks and benefits of fish consumption.

### **What does OEHHA recommend for people who want to eat fish from California coastal locations?**

- OEHHA recommends the amount and type of fish that can be eaten each week as "servings". A serving is 8 ounces prior to cooking (about the size and thickness of your hand for fish fillets). Give children smaller servings.
- Women 18-45 years and children 1-17 years
  - Should not eat members of the shark group, or high-mercury rockfish
  - Can eat:
    - 1 serving per week of Barred Sand Bass, Cabezon, California Corbina, Kelp Bass, Lingcod, or medium-mercury rockfish, or
    - 2 servings per week of croaker, Queenfish, very low- and low-PCB surfperch, or Topsmelt, or
    - 6 servings per week of small flatfish.
- Women over 45 years and men age 18 years and older
  - Can eat:
    - 1 serving per week of California Corbina, high-mercury rockfish, or sharks, or
    - 2 servings per week of Barred Sand Bass, Cabezon, Kelp Bass, Lingcod, or low-PCB surfperch, or

- 4 servings per week of croaker, medium-mercury rockfish, or Queenfish, or
- 6 servings per week of small flatfish, Topsmelt, or very low-PCB surfperch.

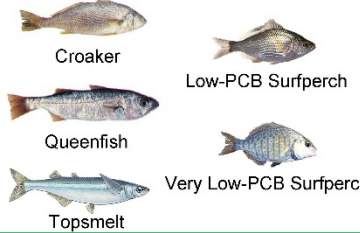

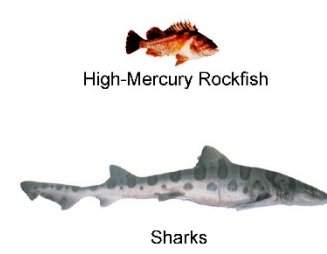
### **What else can I do to protect my health and my family's?**

- Eat a variety of fish.
- Eat smaller (younger) fish of legal size.
- Eat only the skinless fillet or meat portion of fish and shellfish.
- Thoroughly cook the fish, allow the juice to drain away.
- Learn about OEHHA's guidelines for eating sport fish in California:
  - Visit [www.oehha.ca.gov/fish](http://www.oehha.ca.gov/fish) (click on "FISH", then "Fish Advisories"), or call OEHHA at (916) 325-7572 or (510) 622-3170
  - Check the Freshwater or Ocean Sport Fishing Regulations booklets from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, or visit <https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Regulations>

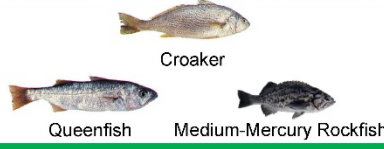

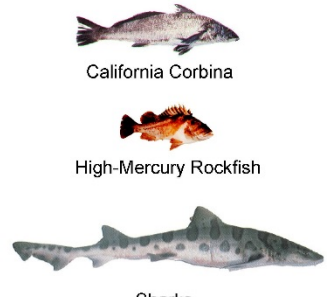
# A Guide to Eating Fish from the California Coast

Advisory for Areas Without Site-specific Advice

## Women 18 - 45 years and Children 1 - 17 years

 <p>Croaker Low-PCB Surfperch Queenfish Very Low-PCB Surfperch Topsmelt</p>	 <p>California Corbina Barred Sand Bass Cabezon Lingcod Medium-Mercury Rockfish Kelp Bass</p>	 <p>High-Mercury Rockfish Sharks</p>
2 total servings a week		
6 total servings a week	OR 1 total serving a week	Do not eat

## Women 46 years and older and Men 18 years and older

 <p>Croaker Queenfish Medium-Mercury Rockfish</p>	 <p>Low-PCB Surfperch Cabezon Barred Sand Bass Kelp Bass Lingcod</p>	 <p>California Corbina High-Mercury Rockfish Sharks</p>
4 total servings a week		
6 total servings a week	OR 2 total servings a week	OR 1 total serving a week
<p><b>Croaker species include:</b> White and Yellowfin <b>Small Flatfish species include:</b> Diamond Turbot, Longfin Sanddab, Speckled Sanddab, Spotted Turbot</p>	<p><b>Medium-Mercury Rockfish species include:</b> Black, Blue, Brown, Kelp, Olive, Rosethorn, and Vermillion <b>High-Mercury Rockfish species include:</b> Black and Yellow, China, Copper and Gopher</p>	<p><b>Very Low-PCB Surfperch species include:</b> Barred, Black, Pile, Rainbow, Spotfin, and White <b>Low-PCB Surfperch species include:</b> Shiner, Silver, and Walleye</p>

### What is a serving?



**For Adults For Children**

A serving is about the size and thickness of your hand for fish fillets. Give children smaller servings.

### Why eat fish?

Eating fish is good for your health. Fish have omega-3s that can reduce your risk for heart disease and improve how the brain develops in unborn babies and children.

### What is the concern?

Some fish have high levels of mercury and PCBs. Mercury can harm the brain, especially in unborn babies and children. PCBs can cause cancer.

**Do not combine advice. If you eat 2 servings of fish from the "2 total servings per week group", do not eat any other fish that week from any source (caught or store bought).**