Why did OEHHA develop an advisory for eating fish from Humboldt Bay?

OEHHA developed an advisory for Humboldt Bay because of mercury and PCBs found in the fish caught from this water body. Humboldt Bay is located along California’s northern coast, adjacent to the city of Eureka, in Humboldt County. 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 Humboldt Bay?

- Mercury
  - Mercury is a metal that comes from natural sources, mining, and air fallout from burning coal and other fuels. It is the most commonly found contaminant in fish.
  - 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 years and children should eat, and another set of advice for women 46 years and older and men 18 years and older.

- Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs)
  - PCBs are 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 caused cancer in animal 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 Humboldt Bay?

- OEHHA compared chemical levels in fish caught from Humboldt Bay to levels that are considered safe for human consumption.
- OEHHA’s consumption guidelines balance the risks and benefits of fish consumption.

What does OEHHA recommend for people who want to eat fish from Humboldt Bay?

- OEHHA recommends the amounts and types of fish that may be eaten each week as “servings.” A serving is about the size and thickness of your hand for fish fillets. Give children smaller servings. For smaller fish species, several individual fish may be required to yield a serving.

- Women 18-45 years and children 1-17 years
  - Should not eat Leopard Shark
  - May eat:
    - 1 total serving per week of Lingcod or Pile Perch or Walleye Surfperch, or
    - 2 total servings per week of Red Rock Crab, Shiner Perch, or White Surfperch, or
    - 7 total servings per week of Speckled Sanddab

- Women 46 years and older and men age 18 years and older
  - Should not eat Leopard Shark
  - May eat:
    - 2 total servings per week of Lingcod, or
    - 3 total servings per week of Pile Perch or Walleye Surfperch, or
    - 4 total servings per week of Red Rock Crab, or
    - 5 total servings per week of Shiner Perch or White Surfperch, or
    - 7 total servings per week of Speckled Sanddab

- For additional fish species found in Humboldt Bay and not included in this advisory, OEHHA recommends following the statewide advisory for eating fish from California’s coastal locations without site-specific advice.
What else can I do to protect my health and the health of my family?

- Eat a variety of fish.
- Eat smaller (younger) fish of legal size.
- Eat only the skinless fillet or meat portion of fish.
- Thoroughly cook the fish, allow the juice to drain away.
- Learn about OEHHA’s guidelines for eating sport fish in California:
  - Visit [https://oehha.ca.gov/fish/advisories](https://oehha.ca.gov/fish/advisories) or call OEHHA at (916) 324-7572 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](https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Regulations)
A GUIDE TO EATING FISH from HUMBOLDT BAY
(HUMBOLDT COUNTY)

WOMEN 18 - 45 YEARS AND CHILDREN 1 - 17 YEARS

Women (18-45 Years)

- Eat the Good Fish: Eating fish that are low in chemicals may provide health benefits to children and adults.

Children (1-17 Years)

- Avoid the Bad Fish: Eating fish with higher levels of chemicals like mercury or PCBs may cause health problems in children and adults.

- Choose the Right Fish: Chemicals may be more harmful to unborn babies and children.

**TOTAL SERVINGS A WEEK**

- **7**
- **OR**
- **2**
- **OR**
- **1**
- **DO NOT EAT**

**Serving Size**

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

**For Adults**

- Eat only the skinless fillet

**For Children**

- Eat only the meat

Fish Images:

- Speckled Sanddab
- Red Rock Crab
- Shiner Perch
- White Surfperch
- Lingcod
- Pile Perch
- Walleye Surfperch
- Leopard Shark

California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment
web www.oehha.ca.gov/fish
e-mail fish@oehha.ca.gov
phone (916) 324-7572
A GUIDETOEATING FISH
from HUMBOLDT BAY
(HUMBOLDT COUNTY)

WOMEN 46 YEARS AND OLDER AND MEN 18 YEARS AND OLDER

Eat the Good Fish
Eating fish that are low in chemicals may provide health benefits to children and adults.

Avoid the Bad Fish
Eating fish with higher levels of chemicals like mercury or PCBs may cause health problems in children and adults.

Choose the Right Fish
Chemicals may be more harmful to unborn babies and children.

7 TOTAL SERVINGS A WEEK OR
5 TOTAL SERVINGS A WEEK OR
4 TOTAL SERVINGS A WEEK OR
3 TOTAL SERVINGS A WEEK OR
2 TOTAL SERVINGS A WEEK OR
0 DO NOT EAT

Speckled Sanddab

Shiner Perch

White Surfperch

Red Rock Crab

Pile Perch

Walleye Surfperch

Lingcod

Leopard Shark

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

For Adults
For Children

Some chemicals are higher in the skin, fat, and guts.

Eat only the skinless fillet

Eat only the meat

California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment
web www.oehha.ca.gov/fish
email fish@oehha.ca.gov
phone (916) 324-7572