



## **INFORMATION ABOUT EATING FISH FROM LAKE CASITAS (VENTURA COUNTY)**

Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA)  
California Environmental Protection Agency  
November 2024

### **Why did OEHHA develop an advisory for eating fish from Lake Casitas?**

OEHHA developed an advisory for Lake Casitas because of mercury or selenium levels found in the fish caught from this water body. Lake Casitas is located approximately 8 miles northwest of the city of Ventura, in Ventura County. This advisory is part of an ongoing effort by OEHHA to provide safe-eating advice for fish from 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 and vitamins, and are a primary dietary source of heart-healthy omega-3 fatty acids. Eating low-contaminant fish while pregnant may be beneficial to the baby's brain development.

### **Which contaminants are of concern for people eating these fish from Lake Casitas?**

- Mercury
  - Mercury is a metal that comes from mining, air fallout from burning coal and other fuels, and from natural sources. It is the most commonly found contaminant of concern in fish.
  - Too much methylmercury, the form of mercury found in fish, can harm the brain, especially in fetuses, babies, and children. Methylmercury can pass from mothers to their babies during pregnancy.
  - Because fetuses, babies, and children are especially sensitive to mercury, OEHHA has one set of advice for how much mercury-containing fish women ages 18–49 years and children should eat, and another set of advice for women 50 years and older and men 18 years and older.
- Selenium
  - Selenium is an element that comes from natural sources and is an essential nutrient.
  - High levels of selenium can cause health problems including hair loss, gastrointestinal distress, dizziness, and tremors.

## How did OEHHA determine the consumption guidelines for eating these fish species from Lake Casitas?

- OEHHA compared contaminant levels in fish caught from Lake Casitas to levels that are considered safe for human consumption.
- OEHHA's consumption guidelines balance the health benefits of fish consumption and the risks from the contaminants.

## What does OEHHA recommend for people who want to eat these fish species from Lake Casitas?

- OEHHA recommends the types and amounts 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 18–49 years and children 1–17 years
  - May eat:
    - 3 total servings per week of sunfish species or Threadfin Shad, or
    - 1 total serving per week of black bass species or Common Carp.
- Women 50 years and older and men 18 years and older
  - May eat:
    - 7 total servings per week of sunfish species, or
    - 3 total servings per week of Common Carp or Threadfin Shad, or
    - 2 total servings per week of black bass species.
- For additional fish species found in Lake Casitas and not included in this advisory, OEHHA recommends following the [statewide advisory for eating fish from California's lakes and reservoirs without site-specific advice](#).

## How long is the advisory in effect?

This advisory is effective until an update is issued because chemical contaminant levels in fish do not change much over time.

## 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 and allow the juice to drain away.
- Learn about OEHHA's guidelines for eating sport fish in California:
  - Visit <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>.



**Women**  
(18 – 49 Years)

**Children**  
(1 – 17 Years)

**3** TOTAL  
SERVINGS  
A WEEK

OR

**3** TOTAL  
SERVINGS  
A WEEK

OR

**1** TOTAL  
SERVING  
A WEEK

OR

**1** TOTAL  
SERVING  
A WEEK

**Children**



Less than 8 ounces



**Women**  
(50+ Years)

**Men**  
(18+ Years)

**7** TOTAL  
SERVINGS  
A WEEK

OR

**3** TOTAL  
SERVINGS  
A WEEK

OR

**3** TOTAL  
SERVINGS  
A WEEK

OR

**2** TOTAL  
SERVINGS  
A WEEK

**Adults**



8 ounces

**One  
Serving**

# A GUIDE TO EATING FISH FROM LAKE CASITAS

(Ventura County)



### Choose the Good Fish

Fish are a good source of vitamins, protein, and omega-3s. Eating fish low in harmful chemicals may provide important health benefits.



### Avoid the Bad Fish

Advisory is based on mercury and selenium, which can cause health problems such as damage to the nervous system.



Sunfish Species



Threadfin Shad



Common Carp



Black Bass Species

♥ high in omega-3s

California Office of Environmental  
Health Hazard Assessment

web [www.oehha.ca.gov/fish](http://www.oehha.ca.gov/fish)

email [fish@oehha.ca.gov](mailto:fish@oehha.ca.gov)

phone (916) 324-7572

Eat only the  
skinless fillet



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

Eat only the meat

