



INFORMATION ABOUT EATING FISH FROM CACHUMA LAKE (SANTA BARBARA COUNTY)

Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA)
California Environmental Protection Agency
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Why did OEHHA develop an advisory for eating fish from Cachuma Lake?

OEHHA developed an advisory for Cachuma Lake because of mercury levels found in the fish caught from this water body. Cachuma Lake is located approximately 15 miles northwest of Santa Barbara, in Santa Barbara 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?

- The American Heart Association recommends eating at least two servings of fish each week. Low-contaminant fish are an important part of a healthy, well-balanced diet.
- 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 contaminant is of concern for people eating fish from Cachuma Lake?

- 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.

How did OEHHA determine the consumption guidelines for eating fish from Cachuma Lake?

- OEHHA compared contaminant levels in fish caught from Cachuma Lake to levels that are not anticipated to cause harmful effects when consumed.
- 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 fish from Cachuma Lake?

- 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
 - Should not eat black bass species
 - May eat:
 - 2 total servings per week of Threadfin Shad, or
 - 1 total serving per week of Common Carp.
- Women 50 years and older and men 18 years and older
 - May eat:
 - 4 total servings per week of Threadfin Shad, or
 - 3 total servings per week of Common Carp, or
 - 1 total serving per week of black bass species.
- For additional fish species found in Cachuma Lake 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 mercury 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)

2 TOTAL
SERVINGS
A WEEK

OR

1 TOTAL
SERVING
A WEEK

0 DO NOT
EAT

Children



Less than 8 ounces



Women
(50+ Years)

Men
(18+ Years)

4 TOTAL
SERVINGS
A WEEK

OR

3 TOTAL
SERVINGS
A WEEK

OR

1 TOTAL
SERVING
A WEEK

Adults



8 ounces

One
Serving

A GUIDE TO EATING FISH FROM CACHUMA LAKE

(Santa Barbara 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

Eating fish with higher levels of mercury can harm the brain and nervous system, especially in fetuses, babies and children.



Threadfin Shad



Common Carp



Black Bass Species

Cook fish and shellfish thoroughly to destroy harmful parasites

Eat only the skinless fillet



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

Eat only the meat



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