



## INFORMATION ABOUT EATING FISH FROM THE ALL-AMERICAN CANAL (IMPERIAL 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 the All-American Canal?

OEHHA developed an advisory for the All-American Canal because of mercury, PCBs, and selenium found in the fish caught from this water body. The All-American Canal is located in southeastern California, near the U.S.-Mexico border in Imperial 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 and 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 the All-American Canal?

- 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 18-49 years and children should eat, and another set of advice for women 50 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.

- Selenium
  - Selenium is a chemical 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 fish from the All-American Canal?**

- OEHHA compared chemical levels in fish caught from the All-American Canal 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 the All-American Canal?**

- 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 18-49 years and children 1-17 years
  - May eat:
    - 2 total servings per week of black bass species, Channel Catfish, Common Carp, Flathead Catfish, or
    - 4 total servings per week of sunfish species
- Women 50 years and older and men age 18 years and older
  - May eat:
    - 2 total servings per week of Channel Catfish, Common Carp, or
    - 4 total servings per week of black bass species, sunfish species, or
    - 5 total servings per week of Flathead Catfish

### **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>, 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)



**Women**  
(50+ Years)

**Men**  
(18+ Years)

**4** TOTAL  
SERVINGS  
A WEEK

OR

**2** TOTAL  
SERVINGS  
A WEEK

OR

**2** TOTAL  
SERVINGS  
A WEEK

OR

**2** TOTAL  
SERVINGS  
A WEEK

**4** TOTAL  
SERVINGS  
A WEEK

OR

**5** TOTAL  
SERVINGS  
A WEEK

OR

**4** TOTAL  
SERVINGS  
A WEEK

OR

**2** TOTAL  
SERVINGS  
A WEEK

**Serving Size**

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

For Adults



For Children



**A GUIDE TO  
EATING FISH**  
*from the*  
**ALL-AMERICAN  
CANAL**

(IMPERIAL COUNTY)

**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.



Sunfish Species



Flathead Catfish



Black Bass Species

♥ high in omega-3s



Carp



Channel Catfish



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**



**Eat only the meat**



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