



INFORMATION ABOUT EATING FISH FROM HUMBOLDT BAY (HUMBOLDT COUNTY)

Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA)
California Environmental Protection Agency
October 2018

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> 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
(18-45 Years)

Children
(1-17 Years)

7 TOTAL
SERVINGS
A WEEK

OR

2 TOTAL
SERVINGS
A WEEK

OR

1 TOTAL
SERVING
A WEEK

0 DO NOT
EAT



California Office of
Environmental Health
Hazard Assessment

web www.oehha.ca.gov/fish
email fish@oehha.ca.gov
phone (916) 324-7572

A GUIDE TO EATING FISH *from* HUMBOLDT BAY

(HUMBOLDT COUNTY)

**WOMEN 18 - 45 YEARS AND
CHILDREN 1 - 17 YEARS**

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.



Speckled Sanddab



Red Rock Crab



Shiner Perch



White Surfperch



Lingcod



Pile Perch



Walleye Surfperch



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





Women
(46+ Years)

Men
(18+ Years)

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

0 DO NOT
EAT



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Speckled
Sanddab



Shiner Perch



White Surfperch



Red Rock Crab



Pile Perch



Walleye Surfperch



Lingcod



Leopard Shark

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