



## **INFORMATION ABOUT EATING FISH FROM NEW MELONES RESERVOIR**

Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA)  
California Environmental Protection Agency  
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### **Why did OEHHA develop the advisory for eating fish from New Melones Reservoir?**

OEHHA's advisory for New Melones Reservoir is based on findings of mercury in fish. The reservoir is located on the Stanislaus River in Calaveras and Tuolumne Counties. Mercury is a common contaminant in fish. This advisory is part of an ongoing effort by OEHHA to provide safe-eating advice for fish in different California water bodies. OEHHA used information from four studies to develop the guidelines for eating fish from New Melones Reservoir.

### **Why should I eat fish?**

- Fish is an important part of a healthy, well-balanced diet. The American Heart Association recommends eating at least two servings of fish each week.
- Fish provides a good source of protein, vitamins, and is a primary dietary source of heart-healthy omega-3 fatty acids. It is important for pregnant women to eat fish because omega-3 fatty acids help the baby's brain develop.

### **How does mercury get into fish?**

Mercury is a metal that comes from natural sources, mining, and air fallout from burning coal and other fuels.

- When mercury in the water gets into the mud or sand at the bottom of water bodies, it is changed by bacteria to the more toxic form, methylmercury, which is taken up by aquatic plants and animals.
- Methylmercury then gets passed up the food chain from plants and animals to larger, older fish, where it builds up in the fish tissue.

### **What are the health concerns from eating fish with mercury?**

Methylmercury can harm the brain and nervous system of people.

- Unborn babies and children are more sensitive to the toxic effects of methylmercury. Therefore, OEHHA gives special advice to women who might become pregnant (typically 18 to 45 years of age) and children (1 to 17 years).
- Women over 45 years and men have lower risk and can eat more fish.

## How do the mercury levels for fish from New Melones Reservoir compare to other lakes and reservoirs in northern California?

- Mercury levels were high in black bass. This is common in northern California. Women 18-45 years and children 1-17 years should not eat the bass.
  - Women over 45 years and men can eat one serving a week of bass.
- Carp had moderate mercury levels, which is also typical. Women 18-45 years and children 1-17 years can eat carp once a week.
  - Women over 45 years and men can eat two servings a week of carp.
- Mercury levels were relatively low in catfish. Women 18-45 years and children 1-17 years can eat catfish twice a week.
  - Women over 45 years and men can eat five servings a week of catfish.

## How did OEHHA determine the guidelines for fish from New Melones Reservoir?

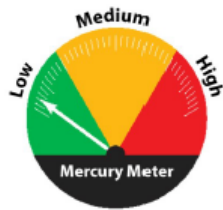
- OEHHA compared mercury levels in fish from this reservoir to acceptable levels of human exposure.
- OEHHA's advice balances the risks and benefits of eating fish.

## What else can I do to protect my health and my family's?

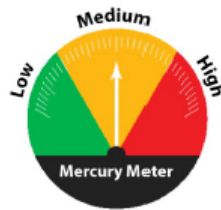
- Eat a variety of fish, especially those low in chemicals (see Guide on next page) and high in omega-3s. Fatty fish like salmon, trout, herring, and sardines are high in omega-3s.
- Eat smaller (younger) fish of legal size.
- Eat only the skinless fillet or meat portion of fish and shellfish you catch.
- Thoroughly cook the fish, allow the juice to drain away.
- Learn about OEHHA's guidelines for eating sport fish in California:
  - Visit [www.oehha.ca.gov](http://www.oehha.ca.gov) (click on "FISH", then "Fish Advisories"), or call OEHHA at (916) 323-7319 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>

# A Healthy Guide for Eating Fish from New Melones Reservoir

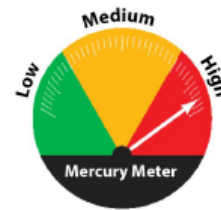
## Women 18-45 years and children 1-17 years



Catfish



Carp



Bass

2 servings a week



1 serving a week

Do not eat

## Women over 45 years and men can safely eat more fish

5 servings a week  
catfish



2 servings a week  
carp



1 serving a week  
bass

### What is a serving?



For Adults    For Children

The recommended serving is the size and thickness of your hand. Give children smaller servings.

### Why eat fish?

Eating fish is good for your health. Fish have Omega-3s that can reduce your risk for heart disease and improve how the brain develops in unborn babies and children.

### What is the concern?

Some fish have high levels of mercury. Mercury can harm the brain, especially in unborn babies and children.