



INFORMATION ABOUT EATING FISH FROM PINTO LAKE (SANTA CRUZ 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 Pinto Lake?

OEHHA developed an advisory for Pinto Lake because of mercury found in the fish caught from this water body. Pinto Lake is located in the city of Watsonville, approximately 14 miles southeast of Santa Cruz, in Santa Cruz 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 Pinto Lake?

- 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.

Are DDTs of concern for people eating fish from Pinto Lake?

- DDTs are a family of pesticides that were banned from use in 1973.
- High levels of DDTs may decrease fertility, harm the developing fetus, and increase cancer risk.
- DDTs have been detected in fish from Pinto Lake at levels that pose less of a health concern than mercury. Following OEHHA's advice will protect consumers of Pinto Lake fish from the harmful effects of DDTs as well as mercury.

Are harmful algal blooms (HABs) of concern for people eating fish from Pinto Lake?

- Harmful algal blooms can change over time. For the most recent information, check the State of California's HAB portal incident map or contact the City of Watsonville¹ for current lake conditions. If a 'caution' sign is posted, shellfish consumption is not recommended, and only cleaned fish fillets should be eaten. If a 'danger' sign is posted, no fish consumption is recommended.

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

- OEHHA compared chemical levels in fish caught from Pinto Lake 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 Pinto Lake?

- 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:
 - 1 total serving per week of black bass species, Common Carp or Goldfish, or
 - 2 total servings per week of sunfish species, or
 - 7 total servings per week of Brown Bullhead
- Women 50 years and older and men age 18 years and older
 - May eat:
 - 2 total servings per week of black bass species or Common Carp, or
 - 3 total servings per week of Goldfish, or
 - 6 total servings per week of sunfish species, or
 - 7 total servings per week of Brown Bullhead
- For additional fish species found in Pinto 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](#).

¹ The HAB portal is available at: https://mywaterquality.ca.gov/habs/where/freshwater_events.html, and the City of Watsonville is available at: <https://www.cityofwatsonville.org/1525/Pinto-Lake>.

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)

7 TOTAL
SERVINGS
A WEEK

OR

2 TOTAL
SERVINGS
A WEEK

OR

1 TOTAL
SERVING
A WEEK

OR

1 TOTAL
SERVING
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



Women
(50+ Years)

Men
(18+ Years)

7 TOTAL
SERVINGS
A WEEK

OR

6 TOTAL
SERVINGS
A WEEK

OR

3 TOTAL
SERVINGS
A WEEK

OR

2 TOTAL
SERVINGS
A WEEK

A GUIDE TO EATING FISH

from
PINTO LAKE

(Santa Cruz 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.



Brown Bullhead



Sunfish Species



Goldfish



Black Bass Species
♥ high in omega-3s



Common Carp



California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment

web www.oehha.ca.gov/fish

email 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.