

**2024 Fish Consumption Advisory
For
Waters of the District of Columbia**

2024 Fish Consumption Advisory Recommendations

DO NOT EAT:

Do not eat eel, carp, or striped bass (rockfish, striper) caught in District waters because they are the most contaminated by chemicals like PCBs and PFAS.

American eel



Carp



Largemouth bass



Striped bass
(rockfish, striper)



RECOMMENDED CONSUMPTION LIMITS

If you do eat fish caught in District waterways, consider using the recommended limits below:

FISH SPECIES	RECOMMENDED CONSUMPTION LIMIT – One serving = eight (8) ounces of uncooked fish*
Blue catfish	No more than three 8 oz. servings per month for adults
Brown bullhead	No more than one 8 oz. serving per month for adults
Channel catfish	No more than one 8 oz. serving per month for adults
Gizzard shad	No more than one 8 oz. serving per month for adults
Northern snakehead	No more than one 8 oz. servings per month for adults
Smallmouth bass	No more than one 8 oz. serving per month for adults
Sunfish	No more than one 8 oz. servings per month for adults
White perch	No more than one 8 oz. servings per month for adults
Yellow Perch	No more than one 8 oz. serving per month for adults

*If species are nixed, once the lowest limit is met, eat no more DC caught fish for the month. Limit consumption of all other fish not listed.

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Fish Consumption Advisory Website Information

Background

The Department of Energy and Environment (DOEE) has been monitoring chemical contaminants in fish since 1980, in cooperation with the US EPA. The 2024 Fish Advisory is based on contaminant concentrations found in the “*Analysis of Contaminant Concentrations in Fish Tissue Collected from the Waters of the District of Columbia*”, 2023 report. The study was conducted by U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Chesapeake Bay Field Office for the Department of Energy and Environment, Water Quality Division. The current fish advisory was issued in 2016 and recommends the consumption limits for fish caught in District of Columbia waterbodies. The 2024 fish advisory decreases the kinds and number of meals (servings) of fish caught in District waters that a person can eat.

Chemical contaminants may pollute the rivers via runoff from streets, highways, sidewalks, stormwater, snow melt, and other sources and accumulate in sediments and the water column. Fish may absorb chemical contaminants from their food and from water as they pass over their gills. Bottom feeding fish, such as carp, eel, and some catfish species, feed on worms and other organisms living in the sediment and may have higher PCB (polychlorinated biphenyls) contamination levels than other fish. Predator fish, such as largemouth bass, may accumulate more contaminants, like PCBs and PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances), over time by eating smaller contaminated fish.

The EPA guidance used to determine the recommendations is under EPA review and this information is preliminary and subject to change. In the absence of updated EPA guidance, DOEE considered both Maryland’s and New Jersey’s guidance for PFAS.

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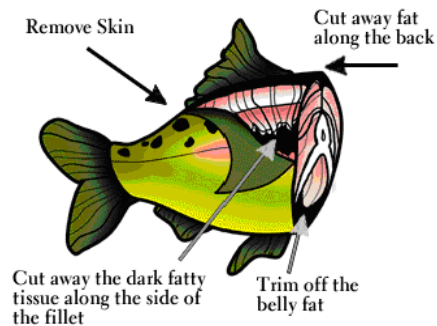
Public Health Advisory Information

While fish can be part of a healthy, balanced diet, some fish caught in the waters of the District of Columbia may contain chemicals of concern such as PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls) and PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances). These contaminants exist in waterways in some cases due to past unregulated industrial practices and may cause serious health effects.

This advisory covers the Anacostia and Potomac Rivers, within the boundaries of the District of Columbia. All District of Columbia waters are under an advisory that recommends not eating eel, carp, largemouth bass and striped bass. Consumption of other fish caught in District waters should be on a limited basis. This advisory is designed to protect against eating large amounts of fish from waters that have not been tested, or for certain fish species that have not been tested or fish that may contain other unidentified contaminants. The assumption is one meal is one-half pound (8oz.) of fish for a 154-pound person.

The advisories are only for fish caught in District waters and do not apply to fish raised for commercial purposes or those bought in stores, fish markets, or restaurants.

Consumers can reduce the potential risk of exposure to pesticide contaminants, like PCBs that bioaccumulate in the fatty tissue, by properly cleaning, skinning, trimming, and cooking fish. Proper preparation generally includes trimming away fat and broiling or grilling the fish to allow remaining fat to drip away. Juices and fats that cook out of fish should not be eaten or reused for cooking or preparing other foods. PFAS, unlike PCBs, accumulate in the muscle tissue of fish. One way to reduce PFAS contaminant exposure is to eat less fish.



Ways to reduce fat content and reduce PCB exposure are as follows:

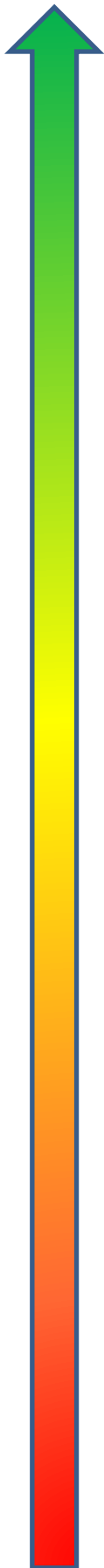
ALWAYS SKIN FISH AND TRIM AWAY FAT by slicing off the belly flap of meat along the bottom of the fish, the fat along the top of the back, and the dark meat along the lateral line on each side of the fish (see diagram above).

ALWAYS COOK FISH SO FAT DRAINS AWAY, preferably by baking, broiling, or grilling the fish; if poaching or deep-fat frying, consider discarding the broth or oil, try to avoid pan frying or making soups and chowders as these methods retain fat laden juices.














No amount of trimming will make species listed as **DO NOT EAT** safe to eat.

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Most Safe



Least Safe

Fish*	General Population 8oz portion	Women <50 years 6oz portion	Children <6 years 3oz portion
 Blue catfish	Up to 3 meals/month	Up to 2 meals/month	Up to 2 meals/month
 Brown bullhead catfish	Up to 1 meal/month	Do Not Eat	Do Not Eat
 Channel catfish	Up to 1 meal/month	Do Not Eat	Do Not Eat
 Gizzard shad	Up to 1 meal/month	Do Not Eat	Do Not Eat
 Northern snakehead	Up to 1 meal/month	Do Not Eat	Do Not Eat
 Smallmouth bass	Up to 1 meal/month	Do Not Eat	Do Not Eat
 Sunfish	Up to 1 meal/month	Do Not Eat	Do Not Eat
 White perch	Do Not Eat	Do Not Eat	Do Not Eat
 Yellow perch	Do Not Eat	Do Not Eat	Do Not Eat
 Carp	Do Not Eat	Do Not Eat	Do Not Eat
 Eel	Do Not Eat	Do Not Eat	Do Not Eat
 Largemouth bass	Do Not Eat	Do Not Eat	Do Not Eat
 Striped Bass	Do Not Eat	Do Not Eat	Do Not Eat

*Limit consumption of other fish not listed

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Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is a fish consumption advisory?

A: A fish consumption advisory is an alert that provides recommendations on safe fish consumption when contaminants are detected in fish tissues in District waters. Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are the most common contaminants causing the fish consumption advisory in the District. The DOEE fish consumption advisory addresses recreational fishing only. The advisory is not for fish sold in supermarkets, restaurants, farmers' markets, or the Maine Avenue Fish Market (The Wharf). The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) sets and enforces the standards for contaminants in fish that are sold commercially.

By following the recommended advisory for eating fish, you may reduce your risk of adverse health effects from exposure to various contaminants and still enjoy the benefits of eating fish. The nutritional and cardiovascular or other health benefits of eating fish are well established, and these advisories can help people make better choices for safe consumption.

Q: What are PCBs?

A: PCBs or polychlorinated biphenyls are man-made organic compounds that can build-up and last for long periods (approximately 8 to 15 years from time of exposure) in fatty tissue and in the environment. They were most often used in electrical equipment in the 1950's – 1970's. PCBs are no longer produced but are still present in the environment.

Q: Why should I be concerned about PCBs?

A: Long-term exposure to PCBs may increase the risk of cancer. Some studies in humans have also suggested that PCB exposure may cause adverse developmental effects in children and developing fetuses. Infants and children are particularly sensitive to the effects of PCBs since their nervous systems are still developing. PCBs also build up in women's bodies and are often passed on in the mother's milk. Therefore, DOEE is recommending that high risk individuals, such as pregnant women, woman planning to become pregnant, nursing mothers, infants, and young children should avoid eating PCB-contaminated fish caught in the advisory areas.

Q: What can be done to reduce the health risk from eating fish containing PCBs?

A: PCB levels can be reduced in fish by following these guidelines:

- Choose to consume smaller fish of legal size. Smaller fish generally have had less time to accumulate any contaminants that may be present in the water or sediments.
- Remove and discard all internal fish organs.
- When preparing the catch please remember to always skin the fish. Contaminants tend to accumulate in the fat between the skin and the muscle of the fish.
- Once the fish is skinned, trim any remaining visible fat, including the belly flap.
- Cook the fish so that any remaining fat drains away from the fish such as grilling or broiling on a rack.
- Fat that has been cooked away from the fish should not be reused for any purpose.

Q: What are PFAS?

A: PFAS or per- and polyfluoroalkyl are man-made substances that have been used in industrial and consumer products worldwide. Production of these chemicals began in the 1940s and there are now several thousand different chemicals in the PFAS family. A wide variety of products, including stain-

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For
Waters of the District of Columbia**

resistant fabric coatings, non-stick coatings (Teflon), food packaging, and firefighting foams contain PFAS. PFAS are extremely stable and do not breakdown easily or quickly in the environment.

Q: How does PFAS enter fish?

A: PFAS are used in thousands of everyday products and industrial applications. These chemicals can contaminate surface water through industrial pollution, some firefighting foams, wastewater, improper waste disposal, and other pathways. This is a problem in the United States and globally. Much like mercury, PFAS can accumulate in fish tissue over time, so fish living in contaminated water can have PFAS in their bodies at much greater concentrations than the surrounding water. It is possible for scientists to detect PFAS in fish tissue before there is enough PFAS in the water to be measured.

Q: What are the health effects of exposure to PFAS?

A: According to the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) exposure to PFAS does not always mean a person will have health effects. Whether or not a person gets sick from exposure to PFAS depends on how long a person was exposed (duration), how often they were exposed (frequency), how much PFAS they were exposed to (dose), and whether the person is a part of sensitive population with preexisting health conditions.

There are many chemicals in the PFAS family, and they may cause different health effects if you are exposed to them. The health effects of PFOS, PFOA, PFHxS, PFDA, and PFNA have been more widely studied than other chemicals in the PFAS family. Some, but not all, studies in humans with PFAS exposure have shown that certain PFAS may lead to the following:

- Interference with the body's natural hormones;
- Increased cholesterol levels;
- Lowered chances of a woman getting pregnant;
- Affect the immune system; or
- Increased the risk of certain cancers.

Scientists are still learning about the health effects of exposures to mixtures of PFAS. For the most part, laboratory animals exposed to high doses of one or more PFAS have shown changes in liver, thyroid, and pancreatic function, as well as some changes in hormone levels. Because animals and humans process these chemicals differently, more research will help scientists fully understand how PFAS affect human health. If you are concerned about PFAS exposure, talk to your doctor.

Q: What can be done to reduce the health risk from eating fish containing PFAS?

A: Health risks related to PFAS exposure via the consumption of fish may be reduced by eating less fish, because PFAS accumulates in the muscle tissue.

Q: Is it best not to eat fish caught in the District if I'm pregnant?

A: Women who are pregnant, nursing, or want to become pregnant should follow recommendations by the FDA and the advice of their doctor.

Q: How many servings per month can you have of any combination of fish species?

A: Eat no more than one meal per month of most fish caught in District waters. Choose small fish of legal size. Do not eat eel, carp, largemouth bass, or striped bass (rockfish, striper) caught in District waters because they have the most PCB and PFAS contamination

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Q: What groups are at higher risk for adverse effects from eating contaminated fish?

A: Those at greatest risk include anyone who eats more than two meals per month of fish caught in the Anacostia and Potomac Rivers. In addition, women who are pregnant, nursing, or want to become pregnant and children below the age of 6 years may be at greater risk of experiencing adverse effects than other members of the general population.

Q: Whom can I contact to get more information on fish consumption advisories or PCBs and PFAS?

A: For further information regarding fish consumption advisories or the health effects of PCBs and PFAS please contact the EPA, the Food and Drug Administration or your health care provider. For a current District fish consumption advisory, go to <http://doee.dc.gov/node/9582>.