

# Should I worry about chemicals in fish?

**Fish is a healthy food, but some fish should be avoided.**

Some fish contain chemicals that could harm you or your family if you eat them. Some fish can cause harm if eaten too often. Fish that are high in **mercury or polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs)** are not safe to eat.

**If you are pregnant, planning to become pregnant, breast-feeding, or have children under 6, read on to learn how to include fish as part of a healthy, balanced diet.**

## Can I tell if fish contain mercury or PCBs?

**No.** Fish that contain mercury and PCBs do not smell, look, act, or taste different than other fish.

## Should I stop eating fish?

**No.** Fish are nutritious and high in protein, vitamins, and minerals. Pregnant and nursing people benefit from fish oil and so do their babies. Fish oil is especially important for healthy brain development in children. Eating fish can help prevent heart disease in adults.



## There are harmful chemicals in certain store-bought fish.

High levels of mercury and PCBs can be found in wild-caught and store-bought fish. For more information on safe fish options at grocery stores, scan the QR code or visit [oregon.gov/storeboughtfish](https://oregon.gov/storeboughtfish) to see our shopping guide.



Look for this symbol when buying fish.



# Where can I get more information?

**Remember the following tips when preparing and eating fish:**

- Eat smaller and younger fish.
- Eat a variety of cooked fish and seafood.
- Trim away skin and fat, especially belly fat. Eat fewer fatty fish, like carp.
- PCBs build up in fish fat. See inside of this brochure for instruction on proper cleaning and cooking.
- Follow the guidelines in this brochure to choose safer types of fish to eat.

## Local Fish Advisories:

Washington State Department of Health Fish Advisories  
[doh.wa.gov/community-and-environment/food/fish](https://doh.wa.gov/community-and-environment/food/fish)  
360-236-3385

Oregon Health Authority  
Advisories and Guidelines  
[healthoregon.org/fishadv](https://healthoregon.org/fishadv)  
1-877-290-6767



# Safe Fish Choices For Pregnancy and Young Children



## Lower and Middle Columbia River



**If You Are:**

Pregnant, breastfeeding, or feeding a child under six

**You should:**

Use this brochure to learn **what fish** are safe to eat, **how** to prepare them, and **where** it is safe to fish for them.

# How can chemicals in fish be harmful?

## Mercury and Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs)

Most fish advisories on the Columbia River are based on levels of mercury and PCBs in fish. Small amounts of mercury and PCBs can damage a brain that is just starting to grow. That's why young children, unborn and breast-fed babies are most at-risk.



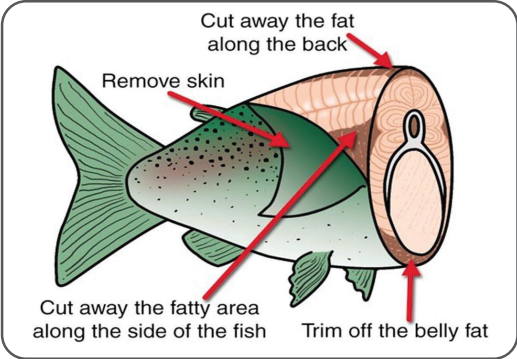
Mercury and PCBs can be passed from a mother to her baby during pregnancy. These chemicals can build up and pass to the baby after birth, through breastmilk. Depending on the amount a child is exposed to, mercury and PCBs can cause health problems, such as:

- Lower birth weight
- Lifelong learning, development, and behavioral problems
- Damage to the immune system, reproductive system, kidneys and thyroid hormones
- Cancer

Mercury and PCBs can also harm older children and adults, but it takes larger amounts. Everyone should follow fish advisories and avoid or limit fish that are high in these chemicals.

## Can chemicals in the fish be removed?

Mercury cannot be removed through cooking or cleaning. Other chemicals, like PCBs, collect in the fat on a fish. When preparing fish, remove the skin, fatty areas, and organs. When cooking, let the fat drip off the fish. Grill, bake or broil fish. Do not use the fish fat for gravy or sauce. Healthy preparation can help reduce your exposure to harmful chemicals in fish by up to 50%.



# What kinds of fish are healthy to eat, and how much is a safe amount?



## HEALTHY CHOICE: MIGRATORY FISH

Safe eating guidelines depend on the type of fish and where it's caught. Salmon, steelhead, and shad are healthy choices from the Columbia River and can be eaten by anyone in any amount.



Salmon



Steelhead



American Shad



## LIMIT: LOWER AND MIDDLE COLUMBIA RIVER RESIDENT FISH

People who are pregnant, planning to become pregnant, and/or nursing and children under 6 years old should limit consumption of resident fish from the Middle Columbia River. Eat no more than **4 meals per month**.

Consumption limits may be different for men and women beyond childbearing age.

Some examples of resident fish include:

Bass



Carp



Catfish



Sucker



Walleye



### Remember:

A meal size is about the size of your palm.



Adult = ~ 8oz  
Child = ~4oz

**LIMIT sturgeon:** Eat up to **4 meals** per month of sturgeon caught from the Lower and Middle Columbia River.

**LIMIT lamprey:** Eat up to **2 meals** per month of lamprey caught from the Lower and Middle Columbia River.

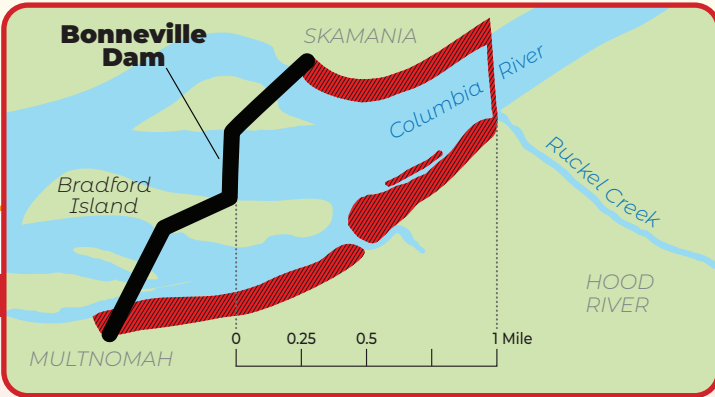
Sturgeon



Lamprey



(See map of Lower and Middle Columbia River on back)



## DO NOT EAT: BONNEVILLE DAM RESIDENT FISH

**DO NOT EAT** any resident fish caught at the Bonneville Dam to one mile upstream at Ruckel Creek. This includes **bass, carp, catfish, sucker, yellow perch, bluegill, crappie, sturgeon, and all other resident fish species.**

**DO NOT EAT** northern pikeminnow from anywhere in Washington or on the Columbia River.

Northern Pikeminnow

