

Why Is There a Fish Advisory for the Walla Walla River?

In 2004, the Department of Ecology (Ecology) completed a water quality study for the Walla Walla River. This study looked at pesticides and PCB levels in bridgelip suckers, carp, catfish, northern pikeminnow, and smallmouth bass. Results showed high levels of PCBs in carp and northern pikeminnow. The Washington State Department of Health (DOH) evaluated these results and issued a fish consumption advisory for the Walla Walla River.

DOH recommends that the general public, especially women who might become pregnant, who are pregnant, nursing mothers, and young children limit their consumption of northern pikeminnow from the upper part of the river and carp from the lower part of the river to one meal per month due to PCBs.

There is an existing mercury advisory for large-mouth and smallmouth bass for rivers and lakes statewide. DOH recommends that women of childbearing age and young children consume no more than 2 meals per month of largemouth and smallmouth bass.

What Are PCBs?

PCBs are chlorinated chemical compounds that were once used in a variety of products such as coolants and lubricants in transformers, capacitors, electrical equipment, old fluorescent lighting fixtures, and hydraulic oils. In 1977, commercial production of PCBs was stopped because of concerns about its toxicity and inability to break down to a safe substance in the environment. PCBs remain in the environment for a very long period of time.

Safe Fish Eating Guide

Ways to Enjoy Fish From the Walla Walla River While Protecting Your Health



Upper Walla Walla River- Dry Creek upstream to the Oregon border

Fish Species	How Much You Can Eat
Northern Pikeminnow	One Meal Per Month (PCBs)
Largemouth Bass	Two Meals Per Month (Mercury)
Smallmouth Bass	Two Meals Per Month (Mercury)
Bridgelip Sucker	No Restrictions
Carp	No Restrictions
Catfish	No Restrictions

Lower Walla Walla River- Dry Creek downstream to the mouth of the Columbia River

Fish Species	How Much You Can Eat
Carp	One Meal Per Month (PCBs)
Largemouth Bass	Two Meals Per Month (Mercury)
Smallmouth Bass	Two Meals Per Month (Mercury)
Bridgelip Sucker	No Restrictions
Catfish	No Restrictions
Northern Pikeminnow	No Restrictions

Health Benefits Gained From Eating Fish

Fish is healthy heart and brain food for you and your children.

Fish are an excellent source of omega-3 fatty acids which are not found naturally in our bodies.



They are essential during pregnancy for the healthy development of your child's brain, retina, and nerve tissue.

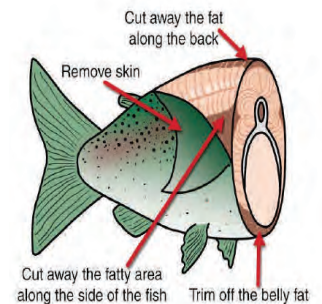
Omega-3 fatty acids help prevent heart disease by reducing blood pressure, inflammation, and blood clotting, which can prevent stroke.

How To Clean and Cook Fish To Reduce Contaminants

Choose fish low in contaminants and **prepare fish properly** to reduce your exposure to contaminants, while continuing to gain the health benefits in fish.

By preparing fish the following way, you can reduce your exposure to PCBs and other contaminants that collect in the fatty parts of fish by up to 50 %:

- ✓ Remove all the fat.
- ✓ Do not eat the fish skin.
- ✓ Grill, broil or bake the fish.
- ✓ Let the fat drip off during cooking
- ✓ Do not use the fat in gravies or sauces.
- ✓ Mercury is stored in the fillet and will not be reduced by preparing this way.



Who Is Affected By This Advisory?

The general population is affected by this advisory, especially infants and young children who are most sensitive to PCB exposure while their brains are still developing. Women of child-bearing age accumulate PCBs in their diet and can pass it on to their unborn child. Children can be exposed by eating foods contaminated with PCBs. While breast milk can contain PCBs, we still recommend that breastfeeding continue. The benefits of breastfeeding outweigh the risks that are associated with PCB exposure.

How Do PCBs Affect Health?

Children exposed in the womb to high levels of PCBs may have slight but measurable impairments in physical growth and learning behavior. Some PCBs behave similarly to dioxins. Also the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has classified them as probable human carcinogens.

How Do PCBs Get Into Fish?

PCBs can travel long distances in the air and be deposited in areas far away from where they were released. In water, PCBs stick to organic particles, such as soil and bottom sediments. PCBs move up the food chain from the smallest life forms, into predatory fish, and then into humans who eat fish and other foods that contain PCBs.

Statewide Mercury Advisory

DOH advises that women of childbearing age and young children should limit the amount they eat of these fish due to high levels of mercury:

Largemouth and Smallmouth Bass:

- Washington Lakes and Rivers Statewide - Consume no more than 2 meals per month of largemouth and smallmouth bass.

Store-Bought Fish:

- Do not eat shark, swordfish, tilefish, king mackerel or tuna steaks.
- Choose light canned tuna, not white. Light canned tuna has 3 times less mercury than canned white (albacore) tuna. Other good choices are cod, flounder, salmon, and trout.

The Health Effects From Exposure to Mercury

Mercury can cause problems with the nervous system that can lead to learning difficulties in children. Other effects include tingling in the hands and feet, lack of coordination, and brain and kidney damage. If you follow these recommendations, you will help keep your exposure to mercury low.

Where To Get Answers About:

Walla Walla River Fish Advisory

Walla Walla Health Department, 509-524-2650

Fish Advisories in Washington State

Department of Health, 1-877-485-7316

www.doh.wa.gov/fish

Walla Walla River Water Quality

Department of Ecology, 509-329-3458

www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/tmdl

DOH 334-085 February 2006

This document is available in other formats for people with disabilities. Call 1-800-525-0127 (TDD/TTY call 711).

Walla Walla River: A Guide to Safe Fish Eating



Fish Consumption Advice for Carp, Northern Pikeminnow, & Bass

For More Information:

Walla Walla Health Department

509-524-2650

WA State Department of Health

877-485-7316

