

Advice for People Who Eat Fish from the Wenatchee River

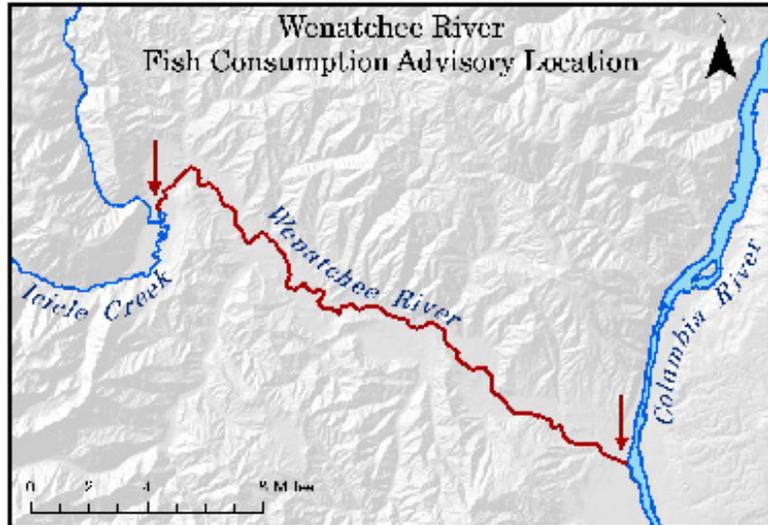
Why is there a fish advisory for the Wenatchee River?

The Washington State Department of Ecology's Washington State Toxics Monitoring Program characterizes toxic contaminants in freshwater fish throughout the state. In their recent report "Contaminants in Fish Tissue from Freshwater Environments 2004-2005" Ecology scientists found that Wenatchee River mountain whitefish had higher levels of PCBs (Polychlorinated biphenyls) than other fish species.

The Washington State Department of Health (DOH) evaluated these results and a previous 2004 Ecology study and has issued a fish consumption advisory for the Wenatchee River.

DOH advises that everyone, especially women who are or might become pregnant, nursing mothers, and young children to not eat mountain whitefish from the Wenatchee River from Leavenworth to the Columbia River due to the high levels of PCBs.

There is an existing statewide fish advisory for northern pikeminnow and freshwater bass due to mercury. DOH advises that women who are or might become pregnant, nursing mothers, and young children to not eat northern pikeminnow and limit their consumption of largemouth and smallmouth bass to 2 meals per month.



What are PCBs and mercury and how do they affect health?

PCBs - PCBs are a group of chemicals that were once used widely in products such as coolants and lubricants for transformers. In 1977, PCBs were banned because of their potential to affect health and persistence in the environment. Children exposed to PCBs in the womb may have learning and behavior problems later in life. PCBs can also impact the immune system.

Mercury - Mercury occurs naturally in the environment. It also comes from industrial air pollution and improper disposal of thermostats, electrical switches, and fluorescent bulbs. Like PCBs, exposure to mercury in the womb can cause learning and behavior problems later in life.

How do PCBs and mercury get into Wenatchee River fish?

PCBs and mercury enter rivers and streams through air or direct release, then settle into sediments. Some fish eat prey associated with sediments. Aquatic organisms do not eliminate these chemicals easily. These contaminants can move up the food chain into predatory fish, then passed to humans who eat fish.



"It is important to continue to eat fish, be smart, and choose fish wisely."

Maxine Hayes
State Health Officer

Healthy Fish Eating Guide for the Wenatchee River

Advice for everyone - especially women who might become pregnant, women who are pregnant, nursing mothers, and young children.

Wenatchee River Fish Consumption Advice



Fish to Avoid or Limit

Mountain Whitefish
DO NOT EAT - Due to PCBs

Statewide Advisory Due to Mercury

Women who are or might become pregnant, nursing mothers, and young children:

Northern Pikeminnow - DO NOT EAT

Largemouth and Smallmouth Bass - Limit to 2 meals per month

Health Benefits of Fish

Fish is an important part of a healthy diet. The American Heart Association recommends eating fish at least 2 times per week.

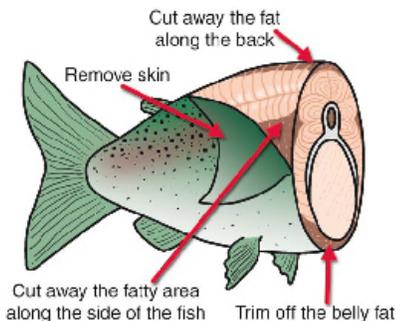
Most foods have some contaminants in them, not just fish. Removing fish from your diet will not eliminate your exposure to contaminants, but will eliminate the many health benefits that you get from eating fish.

Fish is high in protein and an excellent source of omega-3 fatty acids which are not found naturally in our bodies. Omega-3 fatty acids are essential during pregnancy for the development of a child's brain, retina, and nerve tissue.

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

DOH Fish Preparation Recommendations

Fish preparation recommendations can reduce, by up to 50 percent, PCBs and other contaminants that collect in the fat of fish. Mercury is stored in the muscle (fillet) of fish and cannot be reduced by cleaning this way.



Consume younger, smaller fish (within legal limits).

When cleaning fish, remove the skin, fat, and internal organs before cooking.

Grill, bake, or broil fish so that the fat drips off while cooking.

For More Information About:

Wenatchee River Fish Consumption Advisory

Contact: Chelan-Douglas Health District
Ph: 509.886.6400
www.cdhd.wa.gov

Fish Advisories in Washington State

Contact: Washington State Department of Health
Fish Consumption Advisory Program
Toll Free: 1.877.485.7316
www.doh.wa.gov/fish

Wenatchee River Water Quality

Contact: Washington State Department of Ecology
Water Quality & Environmental Assessment Programs
Ph. 360.407.6000
www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/eap/toxics/index.html

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