How Do These Contaminants Get Into Fish?

Mercury, PCBs and per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) can build up in fish to levels that are thousands of times higher than in the water. These contaminants enter the water from:

- Chemical spills that happened in the past. Even though these spills have been stopped, it will take years for the mercury or PCB levels in the fish to drop to safe levels.
- Mercury in the air. Mercury travels long distances from where it is released.

The Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (CT DEEP) is working to improve water quality in Connecticut and is limiting the amount of mercury which can be released into the air.

What Else Can I Do To Eat Fish Safely?

PCBs are mostly in the fatty portions of fish. It is very important to remove skin and other fatty parts. Cook fish on a rack (broil) so that fat can drip away from the flesh.

Remove meaty portions from the bones

Remove and do not eat the organs, head, skin and the dark fatty tissue along the back bone, lateral lines and belly.

Mercury is in the edible (filet) portion of fish. Therefore, you cannot lower your exposure to mercury by cooking or cleaning the fish. Large fish usually have the highest levels of PCBs and mercury. If you have a choice, eat smaller fish of any species. In addition, certain smaller species generally have lower levels of contamination (perch, small trout, sunfish).

What About Fish from Markets and Restaurants?

Many fish from the market or restaurant are low in contaminants. Some of these fish are also high in omega-3 fatty acids, a nutrient oil from fish that improves brain development and helps prevent heart disease. However, some fish from the market can contain high levels of certain contaminants, especially mercury.

In general, people in the High Risk Group can eat up to 2 fish meals a week from the market or at restaurants. Certain fish are especially low in contaminants and can be eaten more often. The following are specific tips for those in the High Risk Group to choose healthy fish from the store:

- Swordfish and Shark: these contain high levels of mercury and should not be eaten.
- Canned tuna: Choose "light" tuna because it has less mercury than "white" tuna.
- Lobster and other shellfish are generally low in chemical contaminants. The tomalley portion of lobster (the green gland) can be high in contaminants and should not be eaten. This applies to lobster from Long Island Sound and elsewhere.

Eat 2 Meals a Week

- Herring
- Pollock
- Salmon (wild)
- Atlantic Mackerel
- Flounder & Fluke
- Sole
- Sardines & Smelt
- Shellfish: oysters, shrimp, clams, scallops, lobster

Eat 1 Meal a Week

- Haddock
- Perch
- Tilapia
- Light tuna (canned)
- Cod
- Salmon (farm-raised)
- Tuna steak or tuna sushi

Avoid

- Swordfish
- Shark
- Red Snapper
- Tilapia
- White Tuna (canned)
- Canned fish (farm-raised)
- Tuna fish (tai fillet)
- Tuna fish (atlin fillet)
- Tuna sushi

People in the Low Risk Group can safely eat higher amounts of market seafood. For example, swordfish or shark - once per month; tuna steak or halibut - twice per week.
### STATEWIDE FRESHWATER FISH ADVICE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Waterbody</th>
<th>Fish Species</th>
<th>High Risk Group</th>
<th>Low Risk Group</th>
<th>Contaminant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All fresh lakes, ponds, rivers &amp; streams</td>
<td>Trout* Sunfish</td>
<td>No Limits on Consumption</td>
<td>No Limits on Consumption</td>
<td>- -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All other freshwater fish</td>
<td>One meal per month</td>
<td>One meal per week</td>
<td>Mercury</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### SPECIAL ADVICE FOR THE HOUSATONIC RIVER AREA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Waterbody</th>
<th>Fish Species</th>
<th>High Risk Group</th>
<th>Low Risk Group</th>
<th>Contaminant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shetucket and Natchaug, Willimantic Rivers (South of Willimantic)</td>
<td>Bass, White Perch</td>
<td>Do not eat</td>
<td>One meal per 2 months</td>
<td>PCBs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bass, White Perch</td>
<td>Do not eat</td>
<td>One meal per month</td>
<td>PCBs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bluegill, Bullheads, Fallfish</td>
<td>One meal per month</td>
<td>One meal per month</td>
<td>PCBs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yellow Perch, Calico Bass</td>
<td>One meal per month</td>
<td>One meal per week</td>
<td>PCBs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Crappe), Rock Bass &amp; Sunfish</td>
<td>One meal per month</td>
<td>One meal per week</td>
<td>PCBs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### SPECIAL ADVICE FOR OTHER CT FRESH WATERBODIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Waterbody</th>
<th>Fish Species</th>
<th>High Risk Group</th>
<th>Low Risk Group</th>
<th>Contaminant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ditch Pond Lake McDonough</td>
<td>Largemouth Bass</td>
<td>Do not eat</td>
<td>One meal per month</td>
<td>Mercury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silver Lake Wytsquap Lake</td>
<td>Smallmouth Bass, Pickerel</td>
<td>Do not eat</td>
<td>One meal per month</td>
<td>Mercury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quinnipiac River (Gorge south to Hanover Pond)</td>
<td>All Species</td>
<td>One meal per month</td>
<td>One meal per month</td>
<td>PCBs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecticut River</td>
<td>Catfish</td>
<td>One meal per month</td>
<td>One meal per week</td>
<td>PCBs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Versailles, Papermill Ponds &amp; attached Little River (Sprague)</td>
<td>All Species</td>
<td>Do not eat</td>
<td>Do not eat</td>
<td>Mercury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knoxpark River (North Canaan)</td>
<td>White Suckers</td>
<td>Do not eat</td>
<td>One meal per month</td>
<td>Mercury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brewster Pond (Stratford)</td>
<td>Catfish &amp; Bullheads</td>
<td>Do not eat</td>
<td>Do not eat</td>
<td>Chlor dane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union Pond (Manchester)</td>
<td>Carp, Catfish, Bass</td>
<td>Do not eat</td>
<td>Do not eat</td>
<td>Chlor dane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natchaug, Willimantic and Shetucket Rivers* (Willimantic &amp; Mansfield)</td>
<td>Bass</td>
<td>One meal per month</td>
<td>One meal per month</td>
<td>PFAS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### SPECIAL ADVICE FOR LONG ISLAND SOUND

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Waterbody</th>
<th>Fish Species</th>
<th>High Risk Group</th>
<th>Low Risk Group</th>
<th>Contaminant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Long Island Sound and connected rivers</td>
<td>Striped Bass</td>
<td>Do not eat</td>
<td>One meal per month</td>
<td>PCBs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bluefish over 25&quot;</td>
<td>Do not eat</td>
<td>One meal per month</td>
<td>PCBs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bluefish 13-25&quot;</td>
<td>One meal per month</td>
<td>One meal per month</td>
<td>PCBs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Weakfish</td>
<td>One meal per month</td>
<td>One meal per month</td>
<td>PCBs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mill River, Fairfield (excluding Southport Harbor)</td>
<td>Blue Crab</td>
<td>Do not eat</td>
<td>Do not eat</td>
<td>Lead</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Footnotes from Table:**

*a* The **High Risk Group** includes pregnant women, women who could become pregnant, nursing women, and children under age 6.

*b* The **Low Risk Group** should limit eating most freshwater fish to once a week.

The **High Risk Group** should eat no more than one fish meal per month of most freshwater fish from local waters.

The **Low Risk Group** should eat no more than one fish meal per 2 months of most freshwater fish from local waters.

- **a**. Most trout are not part of the advisory and are safe to eat. However, the high risk group should eat no more than one meal of large trout (over 15") per month and should not eat trout from the Housatonic River.

- **b**. The Natchaug River from the dam at the Willimantic Reservoir (northern boundary) downstream to where it forms the Shetucket River. The advisory extends 1-2 mile downstream to the Shetucket River to Plains Road. Willimantic River from where it meets the Shetucket and Natchaug Rivers upstream to the dam at Pine Street.

- **c**. Snappers (bluefish under 13") are not on the advisory because they have very low contamination.

- **d**. Snappers (bluefish under 13") are not on the advisory because they have very low contamination.

**WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?**

More specific fact sheets can be obtained by calling 1-877-458-FISH (3474), or by going to the DPH website: [https://portal.ct.gov/fish](https://portal.ct.gov/fish)

- **Health Questions?** Call CT DPH toll-free at: 1-877-458-FISH (3474)

**Notes:**

- **Footnotes from Table:**
  - **a**. The **High Risk Group** includes pregnant women, women who could become pregnant, nursing women, and children under age 6.
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