

# Mercury Advisory Information and Fish Consumption at Lake Mendocino

## Women 18-45 and men 1-17

None	 Redear, bluegill and other sunfish	 Bass  Striped Bass
2 or more Servings a week	1 Serving a week	Do not eat

Virtually all fish contain detectable levels of mercury; however, studies indicate that certain types of fish in Lake Mendocino contain elevated levels of mercury that could pose a health risk to people who eat them frequently.

- **CONTACT WITH THE WATER IS SAFE.**
- **EAT SMALLER FISH OF LEGAL SIZE.** Fish build up mercury in their bodies as they grow.
- **MEAL SIZE DEPENDS ON BODY WEIGHT.** Meals are based on a 160-pound adult eating 8 ounces of fish (6 ounces after cooking) — about the size of two decks of cards. If you weigh less than 160 pounds, eat smaller portions of fish. Serve smaller meals to children.
- **DO NOT COMBINE FISH CONSUMPTION ADVICE.** Do not eat more than one of the listed fish species during the same time period unless you are eating from the Best Choices (green) category. If you eat fish from one place, following the advisory, avoid eating fish from other sources during the same time period.

## Men over 17 and women over 45 years of age

None	 Redear, bluegill and other sunfish	 Bass  Striped Bass
3 or more Servings a week	2 Servings a week	1 Serving a week

- **CONSIDER THE FISH YOU BUY FROM STORES AND RESTAURANTS.** Women of childbearing age and children can safely eat up to 2 meals a week of most fish purchased in a store or restaurant, **OR** use this guide for eating fish caught from this water body. In a week when you eat 2 meals of fish purchased from stores or restaurants, avoid eating fish caught from a local water body. Commercial fish such as shrimp, king crab, scallops, farmed catfish, wild ocean salmon, oysters, tilapia, flounder, and sole generally contain some of the lowest levels of mercury. Women of childbearing age and children should not eat shark or swordfish, which contain the most mercury.
- **FISH FROM OTHER WATER BODIES MAY ALSO CONTAIN MERCURY.** Not all water bodies in California have been tested. With the exception of ocean or river-run salmon or steelhead, which may be consumed more frequently, fish caught from places without an advisory should be eaten in limited amounts.

**\*\*There was not enough information collected on catfish and rainbow trout to include in these reports**

Updated march 2009 For more information, For more information call (510) 622-3170 or visit [www.oehha.ca.gov](http://www.oehha.ca.gov) (Click on "Fish")

- Mercury contamination in fish is a global problem. Emissions from volcanoes and coal-burning power plants release mercury into the air, where it can be carried worldwide before being deposited into oceans, lakes, and reservoirs.
- Once mercury accumulates in bottom sediments in lakes or other water bodies, bacteria convert mercury into a more toxic form known as methylmercury, which fish take in from their diet. Methylmercury can build up in fish to concentrations many thousands of times greater than mercury levels in the surrounding water. Because methylmercury accumulates in fish slowly over time, larger fish of a species usually have higher concentrations of methylmercury than smaller fish from the same water body. Predatory fish, such as bass, tend to have higher levels of methylmercury than other fish, such as trout, which feed more on aquatic insects and other invertebrates.
- Developing fetuses and children are especially sensitive to methylmercury. Pregnant women and nursing mothers can pass methylmercury to their babies through the placenta and through breast milk. Excessive exposure to methylmercury can affect the nervous system in children, leading to subtle decreases in learning ability, language skills, attention, and memory. These effects may occur through adolescence as the nervous system continues to develop.
- For this reason, a more conservative set of guidelines applies to women of childbearing age and children up to and including age 17.
- In adults, the most subtle symptoms of methylmercury toxicity are numbness and tingling sensations in the hands and feet or around the mouth. The levels of methylmercury found in fish from Lakes Sonoma and Mendocino should not result in the health effects described above if the proposed guidelines are followed.