Family Guide to Eating Locally-Caught Fish

Fish are an important part of a healthy diet — choose wisely.

Most fish are safe to eat, but some contain dangerous chemicals (mercury and polychlorinated biphenyls, or PCBs). These chemicals can build up in fish that live for a long time and are predators (such as largemouth bass and catfish). The chemicals enter your body when you eat polluted fish.

PCBs and mercury are odorless and colorless — you can’t tell if a fish is polluted with PCBs or mercury by looking at, smelling or tasting it. PCBs and mercury are especially dangerous for women ages 15 to 44 and children under 15, who should avoid fish from polluted areas.

- PCBs build up in the body and may cause cancer in humans.
- Mercury builds up in the body and can harm the brain and kidneys.
- Mothers can transfer PCBs and mercury to their unborn children during pregnancy and to an infant through breast milk.
- PCB and mercury exposure can harm the brain of a baby or young child.
- Babies born to women who consume high levels of PCBs and mercury can have low birth weight.

Why is this water contaminated?

Some waters throughout North Carolina are polluted with mercury. Electric power generation and incinerators put mercury into the air, where it either falls directly into bodies of water or washes into rivers and lakes when it rains. PCBs are in Triangle-area waters as a result of pollution from commercial activities, such as the Ward Transformer Superfund site, a former industrial facility. Pay attention to state advisories on PCBs, mercury, and other chemicals and to local catch-and-release policies. Visit www.EatFishWisely.org for more information.

Why are children at greater risk?

Children’s bodies are still developing, and an amount of a chemical that would not harm an adult can cause damage to a child. Women, particularly those who are thinking about becoming pregnant, should reduce their mercury and PCB exposure.

DANGER!

- carp
- catfish
- largemouth bass

These fish may contain the highest levels of chemicals. See map on back for details.
Fish Advisories for Map Locations

**BRIER CREEK, LITTLE BRIER CREEK, & BRIER CREEK RESERVOIR**

Do not eat ANY fish from here.

**LAKE CRABTREE & CRABTREE CREEK BELOW DAM**

- **Catfish and Carp:** Never eat from here.
- **Largemouth Bass:** Children and women ages 15 to 44 should never eat this from any location in North Carolina. Everyone else can eat 1 serving per month from this location.
- **All other fish:** Eat up to 1 serving per month.

**CRABTREE CREEK**

- **Carp:** Never eat more than 1 serving per month from here.
- **Catfish and Largemouth Bass:** Children and women ages 15 to 44 should never eat this from here. Everyone else can eat 1 serving per month from this location.
- **All other fish:** Children and women ages 15 to 44 can eat up to 2 servings per week. Everyone else can eat up to 4 servings per week.

**OTHER LOCATIONS ON THE MAP**

- **Catfish and Largemouth Bass:** Children and women ages 15 to 44 should never eat this from here. Everyone else can eat 1 serving per month from this location.
- **All other fish:** Children and women ages 15 to 44 can eat up to 2 servings per week. Everyone else can eat up to 4 servings per week.

**STATEWIDE AND REGIONAL: MERCURY**

Across North Carolina, children and women ages 15 to 44 should never eat largemouth bass or other fish high in mercury caught in the state.

Southeast of I-85, catfish are high in mercury and should never be eaten by women ages 15 to 44 and children.

Why largemouth bass and catfish? These and other high-mercury fish live a long time and eat many smaller organisms, allowing chemicals to build up to high levels in their bodies.

Visit [www.EatFishWisely.org](http://www.EatFishWisely.org) for a complete list of high-mercury fish.