

# Delta Mercury Exposure Reduction Program

## Update on Educational Materials Development

Third Quarterly Community Stakeholder Group Meeting  
Wednesday, September 30, 2015  
Stockton



SACRAMENTO - SAN JOAQUIN  
**DELTA CONSERVANCY**  
A California State Agency



# Delta MERP Educational Materials

- Fish consumption advisories for the three regions of the Delta in Hmong, Lao, Cambodian, Tagalog, Vietnamese, Chinese, Russian, and Spanish
- Overarching Educational Messages
- Continuing Medical Education (CME) Course on Seafood
- Community Guide on the Health Benefits and Risks of Eating Seafood
- Fish Contamination Video – Lake Nacimiento, Hmong, Lao and Cambodian

**Delta Mercury Exposure Reduction Program (MERP)**  
**Summary of Educational Messages for Community-Based Groups**

- **Fish (including shellfish) are highly nutritious and are an important part of a healthy diet.**
  - Fish are high in protein, low in fat, and a good source of important nutrients, including healthy fats called omega-3 fatty acids that are good for adults and children.
  - In adults, eating at least 8 ounces of a variety of fish per week, including some high in omega-3s, may prevent heart disease.
  - The developing fetus also needs omega-3 fatty acids for development of the brain and eyes.
  - By eating at least 8 ounces of fish per week while pregnant and breastfeeding, mothers can pass these nutrients on to their babies and helps to keep them healthy.
- **Everyone should be careful to limit or avoid fish that have high levels of the toxic chemicals mercury or polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs).**
  - Mercury is harmful to the brain and nervous system, and PCBs might cause cancer.
- **It is especially important for women ages 18-45 and children ages 1-17 to avoid eating fish that have high levels of mercury because babies (including the developing fetus) and children are more sensitive to the harmful effects.**
  - Because babies and children's brains are still developing, exposure to mercury can cause them to learn more slowly.
- **Women ages 18-45 (potential childbearing years) should eat fish during pregnancy for the benefits to the fetus, but they should choose fish low in chemicals and high in omega-3s.**
- **The levels of mercury in fish in the Central and South Delta (south of Highway 12) are generally lower than in many other places in CA, including the Delta north of highway 12, Sacramento River, San Joaquin River (south of Stockton), and many CA lakes and reservoirs.**
- **Some types of fish have higher levels of chemical compared to others. Striped bass and sturgeon caught in the Delta are high in mercury and PCBs and should not be eaten by women ages 18-45 or children ages 1-17.**
  - Striped bass and sturgeon caught in rivers, bays, and the ocean are also high in mercury and PCBs; bass and carp in many CA lakes and reservoirs are high in mercury.
- **Some types of fish are low in mercury and can be eaten more often.**
  - These include: rainbow and steelhead trout, and American shad in the Delta; catfish, bluegill, and other sunfish in the Central or South Delta; rainbow trout from most CA lakes and reservoirs; and Chinook (king) salmon from the Sacramento River and Mokelumne River. Always follow the fishing regulations wherever you fish.
  - Women 18-45 and children ages 1-17 can eat 2 servings a week (about 12 ounces\*) of these types of fish.
- **Some fish from stores and restaurants also have high levels of mercury. Women 18-45 and children 1-17, should follow the federal guidelines for the fish they buy.**
  - Do not eat shark, swordfish, tilefish or king mackerel because these are high in mercury.
  - Eat 8 to 12 ounces\* each week of a variety of fish and shellfish that are low in mercury.
  - Limit white (albacore) tuna to 6 ounces\* per week.
- **You can't tell the amount of chemicals in a fish by tasting or looking at it. To protect your health, and the health of your loved ones, follow the recommendations in the advisories.**

# EATING FISH

## Benefits

**Fish (including shellfish) are highly nutritious and are an important part of a healthy diet.**

Fish are high in protein, low in fat, and a good source of important nutrients, including healthy fats called omega-3 fatty acids that are good for both adults and children.

For adults, eating at least 8 ounces of a variety of fish per week, including some high in omega-3s, may prevent heart disease.

Omega-3 fatty acids are essential for healthy brain, eye, and nerve development in babies and children. By eating at least 8 ounces of fish per week, pregnant and breastfeeding women can pass these nutrients on to their babies.

## Risks

**Some fish may contain high levels of mercury and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs).**

**Mercury** is harmful to the brain and nervous system, and **PCBs** might cause cancer. **Everyone should limit or avoid fish that have high levels of mercury or PCBs.**

It is especially important for **women ages 18–45 and children ages 1–17** to avoid eating fish that have high levels of mercury. Because their brains are still developing, babies (including the developing fetus) and children are more sensitive to the harmful effects of mercury and exposure can cause them to learn more slowly.

**So...**

**Women ages 18–45 (childbearing years) should eat fish, but they should choose fish low in chemicals and high in omega-3s. Eating fish is good for both pregnant women and their babies.**

## Fish caught by you, family, or friends

**Local fish advisories guide you on what and how much to eat. Always follow advisories and fishing regulations where you fish. See complete advisory for more information.**

### Eat this

**These fish and shellfish are low in mercury and can be eaten **more** often:**

- **Delta — all areas:** Rainbow and steelhead trout, American shad, clams
- **Central or South Delta:** Catfish, bluegill and other sunfish, crayfish
- **Most CA lakes and reservoirs:** Rainbow trout
- **Sacramento and Mokelumne rivers:** Chinook (king) salmon

**Fish caught in the Central/South Delta (south of HWY 12) generally have less mercury than fish from many other places in CA, including the Delta north of Highway 12, Sacramento River, San Joaquin River (south of Stockton), and many CA lakes and reservoirs.**

### Not this

**These fish are high in mercury and some also have PCBs. They should be eaten **less** often:**

- **Delta — all areas, CA rivers, bays, and the ocean:** striped bass and sturgeon
- **Most CA lakes and reservoirs:** bass and carp
- **Port of Stockton:** all fish and shellfish (due to PCBs)

**Women 18-45 and children 1-17 should not eat any of these fish.**

**PCBs are in the fat and skin of the striped bass and sturgeon.** To reduce the PCBs, eat only the skinless fillet. Remove the fat and skin before cooking and cook the fish all the way through, letting the juices to drain away. **These steps will NOT get rid of any of the mercury.**

## Stores/restaurants

**Federal guidelines provide advice for fish from stores and restaurants.**

Some fish from stores and restaurants have high levels of mercury. Federal guidelines for women ages 18–45 and children ages 1–17 advise the following:

- **Do not eat shark, swordfish, tilefish or king mackerel.** These fish are high in mercury.
- Eat 8 to 12 ounces\* each week of a variety of fish and shellfish that are low in mercury.
- Limit white (albacore) tuna to 6 ounces\* per week.

## How much can I eat?

If you eat the recommended number of servings in a week that is allowed under one type of advisory or guidelines, do not eat any more fish that week. For example, **in one week women 18-45 or children 1-17 can eat:**

Two servings (12 ounces\*) a week of catfish from the Central or South Delta but no other fish from any source that week.

**OR**

Two servings (12 ounces\*) a week of fish or shellfish that are low in mercury from a store or restaurant but no other fish from any source that week.

\*Serve children portions appropriate for their age and calorie needs.

## Remember

**You can't tell the amount of chemicals in a fish by tasting or looking at it. To protect your health, and the health of your loved ones, follow the recommendations in the advisories.**

Menu

▼ MAIN MENU

- Get Started
- How to Use this Course
- ▶ SEAFOOD HEALTH BENEFITS
- ▶ SEAFOOD HEALTH RISKS
- ▶ GUIDELINES FOR CONSUMERS
- ▶ STORIES
- ▶ PLAY AND LEARN
- ▶ Frequently Asked Questions
- ▶ Resources for More Information
- Give Feedback about this Course



## Community Guide on the Health Benefits and Risks of Eating Seafood

Get Started

Seafood Health Benefits

Seafood Health Risks

Guidelines for Consumers



Stories

Play and Learn



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