

New York State Department of Health Issues Updated Fish Advisories for 2024

New Advice is More Protective While Providing Plenty of Options to Eat Fish Caught in NY Waters

DOH and DEC Continue to Monitor for Contaminants in Fish

ALBANY, N.Y. (April 1, 2024) - The New York State Department of Health today issued [updated advisories](#) for the consumption of fish caught in waterbodies statewide. The advisories provide important health information to New Yorkers who enjoy fishing for food and for sport. This year's statewide advice is more protective and provides different advice for each type of fish.

"The Department has reviewed the data and considered input from more than 7,800 anglers to develop this year's Fish Advisories, which are more protective than ever, while providing plenty of options for eating fish caught in the beautiful waters of New York State," **State Health Commissioner Dr. James McDonald said.** "The Department continues to work closely with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to monitor potentially harmful chemicals in fish and so that people can make healthy choices regarding the fish they eat."

Statewide Advice

The Statewide Advice, which applies to most New York State fresh waters, is now more protective and has changed from eating up to four meals a month of any fish to different advice for each fish species. This change is based on a statewide data analysis, the most recent information on mercury toxicity, and guidance from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and neighboring states. It should be noted that mercury levels in fish have not increased; the state is now using more protective health guidelines to set advice.

Popular fish such as trout, yellow perch, sunfish, crappie, and smaller walleye are still great choices for eating. However, people should eat less freshwater drum, white perch, larger walleye, and smallmouth bass.

Waterbody-Specific Advice

Some waters have specific advice because certain fish have higher levels of mercury or other chemicals like polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and perfluorinated alkyl substances (PFAS) than fish in the rest of the state. Check for waterbody-specific advice at www.health.ny.gov/fish. If the water is not listed, anglers should follow the Statewide Advisory or the Catskill or Adirondack advisories if fishing in those regions.

Lake Erie, Lake Ontario, Oneida Lake, and parts of the St. Lawrence River offer the most variety of healthy fish choices making them some of the best fisheries if you want to eat your catch.

Fishing is a popular activity and fish are an important part of a healthy diet. However, some fish contain chemicals at levels that may be harmful to humans. Each year, the Department updates its health advice due

to concerns about contaminants in fish like mercury, PCBs, and PFAS. The goal is to help people make healthier choices about which fish to eat and which to avoid. People who become pregnant and eat contaminated fish may be at a higher risk of having children with developmental or learning delays. Children who eat a lot of contaminated fish may also have potential for negative effects on their development and long-term health. In contrast, older adults may face fewer health risks from these chemicals, so the advice encourages them to enjoy eating these sport-caught fish more frequently.

The Department's health advice is based on [a risk management approach](#) and uses fish contamination data collected by DEC's statewide [fish monitoring program](#). Each year, DEC performs several thousand chemical analyses on more than 1,000 fish samples and provides the results to DOH for use in setting consumption advisories.

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Commissioner Basil Seggos said, "New York is home to excellent fishing opportunities in world-class waterways, attracting anglers from across the state and around the globe. With so many people enjoying their catch as a meal, it is critical to ensure anglers are well-informed and are aware of potential health risks from contaminants that can build up in fish tissue. DEC and our partners at the Department of Health continue to advance efforts statewide to remove harmful contaminants from the environment to protect public health and our natural resources."

Mercury occurs naturally but is also released into the environment from sources like coal combustion. New York State is a national leader in preventing the emission of mercury and other pollutants that cause contamination in wildlife and humans, particularly through the historic phase-out of in-state coal-fired power plants.

Visit the Department's website for Health Advice on Eating Fish You Catch, [here](#).

Additional information about how the Department sets fish advisories is available [here](#).