

## ADVISORY

PREGNANT OR NURSING  
WOMEN, WOMEN OF  
CHILDBEARING AGE AND  
CHILDREN YOUNGER THAN 15  
YEARS OF AGE ARE ADVISED TO  
EAT NO MORE THAN ONE MEAL  
PER WEEK OF PREDATOR FISH  
CAUGHT IN OKLAHOMA LAKES  
AND STREAMS.

CALL THE OKLAHOMA  
DEPARTMENT OF  
ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY AT:  
405-702-1000 or  
1-800-869-1400  
IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS OR  
CONCERNS.

Visit our web site at:  
[www.deq.state.ok.us](http://www.deq.state.ok.us)



## Questions and Answers

**Q: Which fish in Oklahoma are predators?**

**A: Black Bass (Largemouth, Smallmouth and Spotted), Striped Bass, White Bass, Hybrid Striped Bass, Walleye, Saugeye, and Flathead Catfish**

**Q: If I have eaten predator fish, what should I do?**

**A: If you are pregnant, talk to your doctor. Unless you have eaten a large amount of these fish daily, you are probably okay. If you are unsure, contact DEQ at 405-702-1000 or 1-800-869-1400.**

**Q: Should I keep the predator fish I have in the freezer?**

**A: Yes, but limit your number of predator fish meals per week to one.**

**Q: Will catching and releasing predator fish be harmful to me or my family? What about swimming, skiing or boating? Will that be harmful to my family?**

**A: No, only eating the fish may be harmful.**

**Q: How is mercury harmful to our bodies?**

**A: Mercury builds up in the body over a long period of time. At certain levels mercury can cause damage to the liver, kidneys, and the nervous system. It is more likely to cause harm to developing nervous systems of fetuses and small children.**

**Q: Why are only predator fish found to have high levels of mercury?**

**A: Predator fish eat other fish and water creatures. This leads to a higher mercury level intake for predatory fish than that of other fish.**

**Q: Are the other fish safe to eat?**

**A: Yes. DEQ will continue to monitor several types of fish to be certain.**

**Q: Has this occurred in other places?**

**A: Other States around us such as Texas, Arkansas, and Louisiana have similar problems.**

**Q: How long will the mercury problem last?**

**A: Oklahoma waters are checked annually, but the mercury problem is expected to persist for several years.**

# FISH

## IN OKLAHOMA



# MERCURY ADVISORY

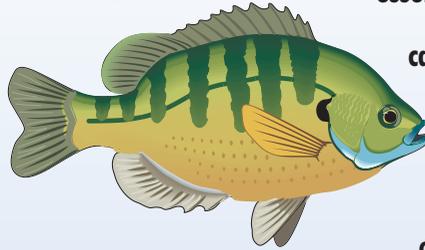
PREGNANT OR NURSING WOMEN, WOMEN OF  
CHILDBEARING AGE AND CHILDREN YOUNGER  
THAN 15 YEARS OF AGE ARE ADVISED TO EAT  
NO MORE THAN ONE MEAL PER WEEK OF  
PREDATOR FISH CAUGHT IN OKLAHOMA LAKES  
AND STREAMS.

## What are Predator Fish?

Predator species of fish in Oklahoma include all species of black bass (largemouth, smallmouth and spotted), striped bass, white bass, hybrid striped bass, walleye, saugeye, and flathead catfish. Fish commonly caught in Oklahoma that are likely to have lower levels of mercury are channel catfish and all species of sunfish.

## Mercury Sources

Mercury is found in the environment because of natural conditions and human activities. When moving through the environment, mercury goes through a series of complex changes. When these changes occur in lake and river sediments, some of the mercury can be converted to an organic form – methyl mercury. Methyl mercury enters the food chain and accumulates most readily in predator species of fish. It can then be passed to people who eat these fish. This is a concern because mercury can harm the developing nervous system of an unborn baby or young child.

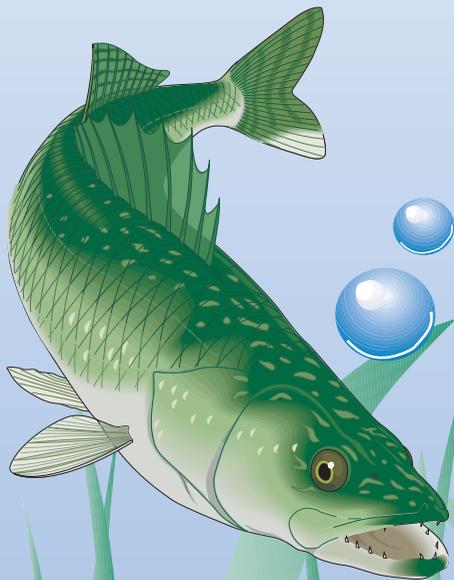
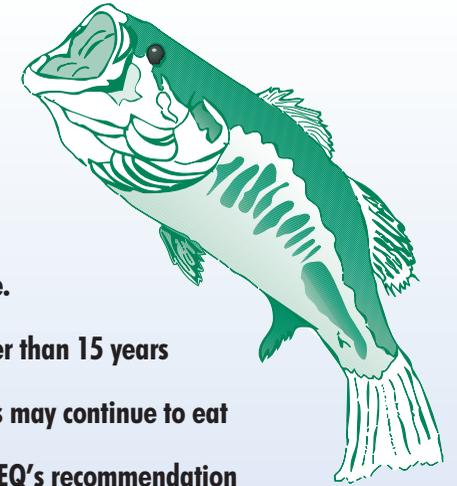


## Fish Are an Important Part of a Healthy Diet

DEQ reminds citizens that fish are an important part of a healthy diet. They provide high quality protein and many essential nutrients. Many people enjoy eating fish that are caught in Oklahoma lakes and streams. However, not all fish should be consumed in unlimited amounts by everyone.

Since women beyond childbearing age and males older than 15 years of age are at less risk for the effects of mercury, these groups may continue to eat a variety of fish, including predators, as part of a healthy diet. DEQ's recommendation is based on the evaluation of limited data concerning mercury in fish flesh and applies to fish caught in waters statewide. DEQ will collect more data, which will enable more specific and targeted recommendations to be made in the future.

For more information contact the Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality at 405-702-1000 or 1-800-869-1400.



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