



**For the week of  
June 6, 2004**

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**Editor:**

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## Weigh fish advisories against fish benefits

**We usually eat a lot of fish in summer. Some of it we catch ourselves. Should we cut back?**

Eating fish has plenty of health benefits, and dietitians still recommend Americans eat more fish than we currently do. But with so many advisories about toxins in fish, it's easy to become concerned.

Here in the Buckeye State, the Ohio Department of Health recommends eating no more than one meal a week from sport fish caught in the state. Before last year, the advisory was directed only at women of child-bearing age and children age 6 and younger. It was extended to everyone last year, mostly to simplify the message and to act as a conservative measure to protect public health.

Some sport fish should be eaten even less than once a week, and some not at all. For a complete list by Ohio waterway and species, see the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency's fish advisory Web site at <http://web.epa.state.oh.us/dsw/fishadvisory/>.

Fish consumption advisories aren't limited to sport fish. Earlier this year, the Food and Drug Administration and the Environmental Protection Agency advised "sensitive populations" to avoid eating shark, swordfish, king mackerel and tilefish because they contain high levels of mercury. Sensitive populations include

women who may become pregnant, pregnant women, nursing mothers and young children.

At the same time, the agencies recommended up to two meals a week of fish and shellfish that are lower in mercury, including shrimp, canned light tuna, salmon, pollock and catfish. Albacore tuna tends to have more mercury, so the agencies recommend sensitive populations limit albacore tuna to one meal (6 ounces) per week.

With that said, it's hard to overstate the health benefits of eating more fish. Higher fish consumption is linked with reduced heart disease, and there's some evidence it reduces risks of cancer, arthritis, autoimmune disease and even depression. Fish is often lower in calories than other protein sources, and the fats it does contain are high in heart-healthy omega-3s. Even the agencies issuing advisories admit the risk from mercury by eating fish and shellfish is not a health concern for most people.

Still, it's important to know as much as you can about what you eat. And all of this information backs up the standard nutrition guideline: Everything in moderation.

*Chow Line is a service of Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Chow Line, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH 43210-1044, or [filipic.3@osu.edu](mailto:filipic.3@osu.edu).*