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Mercury in New Hampshire's Fish

Fish and shellfish are good sources of protein, omega-3 fatty acids, and other nutrients. However, pregnant women should not eat certain kinds of fish because they contain high levels of a form of mercury that can be harmful to the developing fetus.

Methyl Mercury, an organic type of mercury that is found in fish, can be harmful even at low levels. Mercury passes into the brain and interferes with normal development. Fetuses and young children are especially at risk because their nervous system is actively developing. High levels of mercury exposure have been shown to cause difficulties with learning, and to delay development of certain activities like walking and talking. Mercury gets into fish from the sediments at the bottom of a lake, stream, or ocean.

The New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services recommends the following guidelines for how much fish people should eat:

- Women who are pregnant and/or who are breast feeding should only eat one 8-ounce serving of freshwater fish per month
- Children under the age of 7 should only eat one 4 ounce serving of freshwater fish per month
- All other people should eat no more than four 8 ounce servings of freshwater fish per month
- People should only eat smaller fish because mercury accumulates over time and fish that are older and larger will have more mercury than younger smaller fish.

Fish Guidelines for women who are pregnant, may become pregnant or breastfeeding:

- No shark, swordfish, king mackerel or tilefish
- Stocked trout, rainbow or brown, one serving per week.
- Brook trout, stocked or wild, one serving per week.
- Canned tuna should be limited to one serving per week.

Since certain bodies of water have higher levels of mercury contamination than others, the Department of Health and Human Services recommends:

- For Horseshoe Pond in Merrimack, everyone should avoid eating Largemouth Bass.
- For Moore and Comeford Reservoirs, women of reproductive age and children under 7 should avoid eating all species of fish. All others people can safely eat up to 2 servings of fish per month taken from these reservoirs.
- For McIndoes Reservoir, reproductive age women and children under the age of 7 should limit consumption to no more than 1 serving of fish per month. All other people can safely eat up to 3 meals per month of fish taken from this reservoir.

All of the fish-mercury consumption limits should be considered together. For example, a pregnant woman who eats two cans of light tuna per week is advised not to consume any additional meals of other ocean fish or freshwater fish that week.