



2002 National Listing of Fish & Wildlife Advisories

Fish are an important part of a healthy diet. They are a lean, low-calorie source of protein. Some fish people catch in the Nation's lakes, rivers, oceans, and estuaries, however, may contain chemicals that could pose health risks. The National Listing of Fish & Wildlife Advisories (NLFWA) contains information for those instances where local governments have found that the fish in their waters may not be safe to eat.

The NLFWA now contains information on fish consumption advisories that were issued in 2002. It describes advisories issued by the federal government, states, territories and tribes and local governments. Individuals can use the NLFWA to get information on advisories, but it may be more detailed than you need for that purpose. Please contact your local state or tribal [representative](#) to find out about the safety of the waters where you live.

What are fish advisories?

Generally, local governments protect people from possible risks of eating contaminated fish by monitoring their waters and issuing fish advisories when contaminant levels are unsafe. While most of the Nation's waters contain fish that are safe to eat, a consumption advisory may recommend that people limit or avoid eating certain species of fish caught from certain lakes, rivers or coastal waters. In some cases, advisories apply to specific water types (such as lakes), or they may include recommendations for specific groups (like pregnant women or children). Advisories apply to locally-caught fish or wildlife as well as fish purchased in stores and restaurants (find out about nationwide advisories by visiting the [EPA fish advisory website](#)). Many States have increased the number of notices of "no restriction" or safe eating guidelines to tell the public that the fish from certain areas have been tested and are safe to eat. Statewide advisories are also issued by many states: they warn the public of possible risks from eating certain species from certain types of waters. Commercial fishing bans may also be issued which forbid the harvest and sale of fish, shellfish, and/or wildlife species from a designated waterbody or area.

What is in the National Listing?

The purpose of the NLFWA is not to discourage you from eating fish. It is designed to help you find areas where fish are low in chemical pollutants so that you and your family can continue to enjoy the benefits of eating fish. The 2002 NLFWA (at <http://www.epa.gov/waterscience/fish/>) lists 2,800 advisories in the United States and contains, for each advisory:

- Species and size of fish or wildlife under advisory
- Chemical contaminants covered by the advisory
- Location and surface area of the waterbody under advisory
- Population subject to the advisory
- Local contacts (including names, phone numbers and websites)

You can use the website to generate national, regional, state or local maps that illustrate advisory information.

What does the National Listing tell us?

A statewide advisory warns the public of possible contamination of specific species of fish or wildlife in certain waters. Twenty-eight states currently have statewide advisories that cover all waters or certain waterbody types within the state for one or more species of fish. The States of Florida, Illinois, and Rhode Island each issued statewide advisories in 2002 for all lakes and rivers. In addition, the Native American Tribe, Micmac tribe of Maine also issued a new statewide advisory for tribal members. In all, about 95,000 thousand lakes (32.9% of lake surface area) and 544,000 thousand river miles (15%) are under fish advisory. About 70% of the coastline of the lower 48 states is under advisory, including 92% of the Atlantic Coast, 100% of the Gulf Coast, and several areas along the Pacific Coast.

For what pollutants are the advisories issued?

Most advisories involve five primary contaminants: mercury, PCBs, chlordane, dioxins, and DDT. These chemical contaminants persist for long periods in sediments where bottom-dwelling animals accumulate and pass them up the food chain to fish. Levels of these contaminants may increase as they move up the food chain, so top predators in a food chain (such as largemouth bass or walleye) may have levels a million times higher than that in the water. Mercury, PCBs, chlordane, dioxins, and DDT were at least partly responsible for 96% of all fish consumption advisories in effect in 2002. In 2002, 19 states issued statewide advisories for mercury in freshwater lakes and/or rivers. Another 11 states issued statewide advisories for mercury in their coastal waters. Thirty-eight states have issued PCB advisories, and four states added nine new PCB advisories in 2002. The number of dioxin advisories is small compared to the other four major contaminants. Although its use has been banned since 1975, the number of advisories currently in effect for DDT continues to slowly increased.

Where can I get more information about fish advisories?

For more information about the National Listing or the Advisories, you can visit the EPA's website at <http://www.epa.gov/waterscience/fish/> . For a more detailed analysis of the 2002 information, see our [Technical Fact Sheet](#). To find out how to select and prepare fish, read "[A Guide to Healthy Eating of the Fish You Catch](#)". For more information about reducing your health risks from eating fish you catch, contact the local or state health or environmental protection department. You can find the telephone number in the blue section of your local telephone directory. Or you can find the [name and number of a state or local fish advisory contact](#) at the website.