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Reel in Your Annual Guide to Safe Eating of Fish Caught in Missouri Streams

Missouri's 2009 Fish Consumption Advisory, featuring the finer points on ways to clean, cook and safely prepare locally caught fish, is now available on the state health department's Web site.

Released each year prior to Missouri's fishing season, the Fish Consumption Advisory provides guidelines for eating Missouri-caught fish, information on the potential health effects of key contaminants and advice on way to handle fish to reduce contaminants prior to consumption.

New to this year's report is the addition of walleye to the state-wide limited-consumption advisory because of mercury contamination.

Also new this year is advice on steps individuals can take to reduce their exposure to lead in fishing tackle. Anglers are advised not to place such items in their mouths, to wash their hands before eating or drinking and to purchase fishing tackle made of alternative materials, such as tin, bismuth, and tungsten.

All fish contain small amounts of chemical contaminants. In most instances, and for most people, the health benefits of eating fish outweigh the potential health risks from contaminants. However, there are occasions when limited or even no consumption of fish is appropriate.

Because of elevated mercury levels in certain fish, the guide advises pre-teens and women of child-bearing age to eat no more than one fish meal per month of certain types of fish. The limit applies to walleye, largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, and spotted bass longer than 12 inches caught anywhere in the state.

Chemicals commonly found in fish may affect children and developing fetuses differently than adults. Therefore, many of the recommended limits on fish consumption are especially important for children younger than 13 years and women of childbearing age, particularly those who are pregnant or nursing.

State health officials also noted that the advisory has been changed for the Blue River in Jackson County between Minor Park and the Missouri River. It recommends that all consumers eat no more than one meal per month of carp and channel catfish taken from that stretch of the Blue River because of the presence of chlordane and PCBs.

The Department of Health and Senior Services, which publishes the advisory, also has removed the consumption warning for largemouth bass greater than 12 inches taken from Simpson Park Lake in St. Louis County.

The 2009 consumption guidelines are based on the most recent fish sampling information available. Included in the advisory are tips for cleaning, preparing and cooking fish in ways that help reduce potential exposure to contaminants.

The advisory also outlines the benefits of eating fish as part of a healthy diet. Fish is a good source of high-quality protein and essential nutrients. Fish is low in cholesterol. And some types of fish have omega-3 fatty acids that are essential for the development of the nervous system. Such fatty acids may be beneficial in reducing heart disease and may have other beneficial health effects.

To ensure that Missourians continue to enjoy the state's fishing resources and obtain the healthful effects of eating fish, state officials will continue to monitor fish tissue for contaminants. The full advisory may found at: www.dhss.mo.gov/fishadvisory/.

Following is a brief summary of the Department of Health and Senior Services' 2009 Fish Consumption Advisory. Individuals are advised to eat no more meals than recommended. One meal is considered 11 ounces for adults and three ounces for children.

Advisory Group: Sensitive Populations

Key Contaminant: Mercury

While there are many benefits to eating fish, the department advises consumers to be aware of the potential for adverse effects on the central nervous and cardiovascular systems from mercury in fish. Because of the potential risk mercury poses to the developing nervous system of fetuses and young children, the department continues to recommend limits on fish consumption for children younger than 13 years and women who are pregnant or may become pregnant and nursing mothers. For more information, see www.epa.gov/mercury/effects.htm. Our statewide mercury advisory for all water bodies in Missouri is as follows:

Sensitive populations are advised to eat no more than:

- **One meal per month:** walleye, largemouth bass, spotted bass, and smallmouth bass greater than 12 inches in length,
- **One meal per week:** all other sport fish, In absence of local advisories, consumers are advised to restrict fish consumption of locally caught fish to one meal per week because all fish have various levels of mercury. For more information, go to: www.epa.gov/waterscience/fishadvice/1-meal-per-week.pdf.

For **sensitive populations**, the following specific water bodies have limited-consumption advisories due to mercury:

- Clearwater Lake (Reynolds County)--
 - **One meal per month:** white bass greater than 15 inches in length.

NOTE: The EPA and Food and Drug Administration's consumer advisory for mercury in commercial fish recommends that women who are pregnant, women of childbearing age who might become pregnant, nursing mothers, and young children not eat any shark, swordfish, king mackerel, or tilefish. This group also can safely consume up to 12 ounces a week of shrimp, canned light tuna, salmon, pollock, or catfish. For more information, go to:

www.epa.gov/waterscience/fishadvice/advice.html or www.epa.gov/waterscience/fish/MethylmercuryBrochure.pdf.

Advisory Group: All Consumers

Key Contaminants: PCBs and chlordane

While state-wide fish tissue contaminant concentrations have declined, PCBs and chlordane remain at levels of health concern for certain water bodies. Health department officials recommend limited consumption of specified fish for **all consumers** from the following locations for the reasons stated:

- Missouri and Mississippi rivers--
 - **One meal per month:** shovelnose sturgeon fish tissue (excluding eggs) due to PCBs and chlordane.
 - **Do not eat:** sturgeon eggs due to PCBs and chlordane.

- **One meal per week:** flathead, channel, and blue catfish greater than 17 inches due to PCBs, chlordane, and mercury.
- **One meal per week:** carp species greater than 21 inches due to PCBs, chlordane, and mercury.
- Blue River (from Minor Park to the Missouri River in Jackson County)--
 - **One meal per month:** carp species and channel catfish on all sizes due to chlordane and PCBs.
- Turkey Creek (near Highway "P" in Jasper County)--
 - **One meal per week:** buffalo species greater than 21 inches due to PCBs and chlordane.
- Simpson Park Lake (St. Louis County)--
 - **One meal per month:** buffalo species greater than 16 inches due to chlordane, mercury, and PCBs.

Advisory Group: All Consumers

Key Contaminant: Lead

DHSS recommends that **all consumers** limit consumption of specified fish for from the following locations:

- Big River (St. Francois and Jefferson counties) and Flat River (St Francois County from Highway B to six miles downstream to where it enters Big River)--
 - **Do not eat:** carp, sunfish, redhorse, or other suckers due to lead.
- Big Creek (Iron County near Glover)--
 - **Do not eat:** sunfish due to lead.
- Middle Fork of the Black River (Reynolds County)--
 - **Do not eat:** smallmouth bass due to lead.