

Eat Safe Fish FAQs

How do I know which fish are the “safe” fish to eat?

Each year, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) tests for chemicals in filets from fish caught in lakes and rivers around Michigan. The results from those tests are used to write the **MDHHS Eat Safe Fish Guide**. The **MDHHS Eat Safe Fish Guide** can help you learn which Michigan fish are safe to eat up to three or four times a week and which fish are better to avoid.

If you are a healthy adult who is not planning on having children in the next several years and you don't fish in an area that has “Do Not Eat” signs posted by MDHHS, then it is usually OK to eat most Michigan fish a one or two times a year without looking them up in the **Eat Safe Fish Guide** first. MDHHS does recommend that you at least follow the S.A.F.E. fishing tips listed below:



If you don't eat a lot of fish or have access to the **Eat Safe Fish Guide** when you're fishing, you can still choose cleaner fish to eat if you remember to stay **S.A.F.E.:**



S Smaller fish are better. (Bluegill, yellow perch, and other panfish are *usually* the best choice.)

A Avoid large predator fish and bottom feeders. (Call for the **Guide** if you go after these fish.)

F Fat should be removed. (Some chemicals can be removed with the fat.)

E Eat fish that have been grilled or broiled. (So that more fat and chemicals can drip away.)

If you eat a lot of fish and want a free copy of the **Eat Safe Fish Guide**, call MDHHS at 1-800-648-6942 or visit www.michigan.gov/eatsafefish.

Will I be able to tell if the fish are safe to eat by looking at them?

No. You will not be able to see any of the chemicals, even mercury, in the fish. To find the chemicals, MDHHS tests the fish in a laboratory. MDHHS only tests the filet of the fish - the part most people eat - for chemicals.

You can't see the chemicals in the water, either. Some very clear lakes or rivers can still have fish with higher levels of chemicals. If you eat a lot of Michigan fish, you can check the **MDHHS Eat Safe Fish Guide** to find the safest options from the lake or river that you're fishing.



Is it safe to touch a fish that has chemicals in it?



Yes. You do not need to wear gloves or worry about getting the chemicals on you. They will not absorb into your skin from the fish.

Catch and release is almost always safe in Michigan regardless of where you're fishing. However, sometimes your local health department may issue a temporary warning against touching the water - including the fish that live in the water - because of problems like sewage overflow or harmful algae blooms.

You can contact your local health department or visit <http://www.deq.state.mi.us/beach/> for local warnings about water quality.

