

Eat Safe Fish FAQs



What are the health benefits of eating fish?

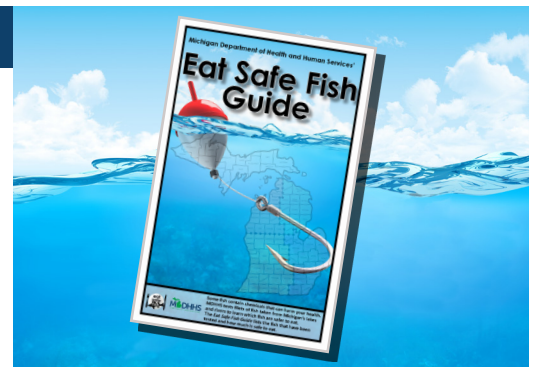
Fish have great health benefits and can be part of a healthy diet. They are an excellent source of low-fat protein, vitamins and minerals. Some fish are even packed with heart-healthy “good fats” called omega-3 fatty acids.

Omega-3s are important fats your body needs. They can improve heart health, help with brain and eye development and may help with arthritis symptoms. Babies can also get the benefits of omega-3s through breast milk.

How do I know which fish are safe 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 are used to write the ***Eat Safe Fish Guide***. The ***Eat Safe Fish Guide*** can help you learn which Michigan fish are safe to eat and which fish are better to avoid.

If you eat fish caught in waterbodies around Michigan and want a free copy of the ***Eat Safe Fish Guide***, call MDHHS at 800-648-6942 or visit 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 in the fish. You also can't taste or smell the chemicals listed in the ***Eat Safe Fish Guide***. To find the chemicals, MDHHS tests the fish in a laboratory.

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.

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. However, it is always good to wash your hands after touching the fish, especially before eating or drinking.

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 algal blooms. Avoid fishing in areas with posted warnings against touching the water.

You can contact your local health department or visit EGLE.state.mi.us/beach and click the “Beachguard” tab for local warnings about water quality.



Why should I use the Eat Safe Fish Guide?



The **Eat Safe Fish Guide** is designed to protect everybody - men, women and children - who eats fish on a regular basis.

The chemicals in fish also won't make you sick right away. Some people will be fine after years of eating fish with these chemicals in them. Others could have health problems.

You may choose to eat more fish than is recommended. These guidelines are not rules; it is your choice. The **Eat Safe Fish Guide** makes it easy for you to make safer choices for you and your family and avoid eating too many chemicals in fish.



If you eat fish, you might also be eating chemicals, like mercury, PCBs, PFOS or dioxins. These chemicals can stay in your body for a long time.

Using the **Eat Safe Fish Guide** and following the MI Serving suggestions will keep you from getting too many chemicals in your body at once from eating fish. Scientists set the limits in the **Eat Safe Fish Guide** so that you are protected from possible health problems from the chemicals.

Chemical in fish	Potential Health Problems
DDT (dichlorodiphenyl-trichloroethane)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Development of cancer.• Development of diabetes.
Dioxins	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Development of cancer.• Reduced fertility.• Harm to thyroid function.
Mercury	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Harm to brain development in fetuses and children.• Harm to heart function in older adults.• Harm to the immune system.
PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Harm to brain development in fetuses and children.• Development of cancer.• Development of diabetes.• Harm to the immune system.
PFOS (perfluorooctane sulfonate)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reduced fertility.• Harm to the immune system.• High LDL and total cholesterol.• Small decreases in infant birth weight.• Pre-eclampsia in pregnant people.• Liver damage.• Thyroid disease.
Selenium	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hair loss.• Loss of fingernails.• Fatigue.• Irritability.• Mild nerve damage.
Toxaphene	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Harm to the immune system.