PFAS in Fish and Deer

Michigan has more than 11,000 inland lakes, rivers and streams and the longest freshwater coastline in the country. All this water offers a variety of fish that are great to eat. Michigan is also home to white-tailed deer, a lean and nutritious meat. However, some fish and deer caught in Michigan have been found to have per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in them, which are not naturally found in the environment and can be harmful to your health. The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) has issued fish and deer consumption guidelines to limit exposure to perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS), a type of PFAS.

How do PFAS get into fish and deer?

The widespread use of PFAS has led to PFAS entering the environment. This means that some water, grasses and soil may have PFAS in it. Some PFAS are bioaccumulative, meaning that they will build up in fish and deer over time. Deer can be exposed to PFAS as they consume water, grass and soil in the environment. Fish can be exposed to PFAS from the food they eat and the water they live in.

What should I do if I hunt or fish?

To get the health benefits of eating fish and deer with less risk, MDHHS recommends the following:

Use the Eat Safe Fish Guides to help you find fish with lower levels of PFAS to eat from Michigan lakes and rivers. To find the Eat Safe Fish Guide for your waterbody, visit Michigan.gov/EatSafeFish and click on "Find my Area."

Follow any posted deer or other wild game consumption advisories. Deer and other wild game advisories can be found at Michigan.gov/EatSafeGame.

Do not eat the organs from deer or fish. Organs tend to have higher levels of chemicals than muscle and many chemicals, including PFAS, can build up in the organs of fish and deer.

What are PFAS?

PFAS are a large group of human-made chemicals that have been used in manufacturing and commercial products since the 1940s. PFAS are used to fight fires and repel oil, stains, grease and water. PFAS can be found in:

- Carpeting.
- Waterproof clothing.
- Upholstery.
- Food paper wrappings.
- Personal care products.
- Firefighting foam.
- Stain repellents.
- Non-stick cookware.

PFAS are chemicals that do not break down easily. When products containing PFAS are created or used, PFAS can be released into the environment. This has resulted in PFAS being found in some fish and deer in Michigan.

How do PFAS impact health?

Some PFAS can build up in bodies over time. Most people have some PFAS in their bodies, but long-term exposure to certain types of PFAS may impact health. There are thousands of types of PFAS, and some have been associated with certain health outcomes. Research continues to fully understand health outcomes associated with exposure to PFAS. You can learn more about PFAS exposure and health in people from the PFAS Exposure and Your Health Fact Sheet (URL: bit.ly/PFAS-Health).

For More Information

- Visit the Michigan PFAS Response Team (MPART) site at Michigan.gov/PFASResponse.
- Call the MDHHS Environmental Health hotline at **800-648-6942.**

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