



Safe Eating Guidelines for American Shad, Chinook (king) Salmon, Steelhead Trout, Striped Bass, and White Sturgeon in California

Frequently Asked Questions

Why did OEHHA issue a new advisory for these fish species?

American shad, Chinook (king) salmon, steelhead trout, striped bass, and white sturgeon are “anadromous” fish—meaning they live in the ocean, estuaries, and rivers. These fish leave the ocean and swim up rivers to spawn. Because of this behavior, they can be caught in many different water bodies. Yet, they are all part of one population for their species. OEHHA has given advice for these fish species in some advisories before. This new, uniform advice is meant to make it easier to find and follow advice for people that fish for and eat these types of fish. The same advice applies whether the fish are caught in the ocean, bay, Delta, rivers, or streams. It does NOT apply to these species caught in lakes or reservoirs. Chemical levels can be higher in fish that are landlocked in lakes and reservoirs.

Does the new advice for these fish differ from other advisories?

This new advisory is based on samples of these fish from many water bodies where they are caught in California rather than just from one water body. OEHHA updated the advice for these species in the other advisories when this new advisory was issued. The advice for each of these species is the same whether they are caught in the ocean, bay, Delta, rivers, or streams in California.

Why is there a need for safe eating guidelines for these fish?

Fish in California were tested for chemicals in their bodies. The most common chemicals found in fish in California are mercury and PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls). American shad, Chinook (king) salmon, and steelhead trout were low in these chemicals. Striped bass and sturgeon had more mercury and PCBs in their flesh. The guidelines for how much is safe to eat recommend women ages 18 to 45 and children ages 1 to 17 eat less fish than women over 45 years and men over 17 years. The difference is meant to protect developing babies (in the womb) and children of all ages. Their brains are more sensitive to health effects from PCBs and methylmercury, the form of mercury in fish.

OEHHA’s safe eating guidelines provide people information to make healthy choices when choosing fish to eat. Eating fish provides health benefits including less heart disease and stroke. Fish consumption during pregnancy has been linked with improvements in vision and the way the brain performs in young children.

To learn more, go to www.oehha.ca.gov (click on Fish) or call (916) 327-7319 or (510) 622-3170.