



INFORMATION ABOUT EATING FISH FROM LOS BANOS RESERVOIR (MERCED COUNTY)

Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA)

California Environmental Protection Agency

December 2021

Why did OEHHA develop an advisory for eating fish from Los Banos Reservoir?

OEHHA developed an advisory for Los Banos Reservoir because of mercury found in the fish caught from this water body. Los Banos Reservoir is located approximately 33 miles southwest of Merced, in Merced County. This advisory is part of an ongoing effort by OEHHA to provide safe-eating advice for fish in different California water bodies.

Why should I eat fish?

- Low-contaminant fish are an important part of a healthy, well-balanced diet. The American Heart Association recommends eating at least two servings of fish each week.
- Fish are a good source of protein and vitamins, and are a primary dietary source of heart-healthy omega-3 fatty acids. Eating low-contaminant fish while pregnant may help the baby's brain develop.

Which chemicals are of concern for people eating fish from Los Banos Reservoir?

- Mercury
 - Mercury is a metal that comes from mining, air fallout from burning coal and other fuels, and natural sources. It is the most commonly found contaminant of concern in fish.
 - Too much methylmercury, the form of mercury found in fish, can harm the brain, especially in fetuses, babies, and children. Mothers can pass methylmercury to their babies during pregnancy.
 - Because fetuses, babies, and children are especially sensitive to mercury, OEHHA has one set of advice for the amount of mercury-containing fish that women age 18–49 years and children should eat, and another set of advice for women 50 years and older and men 18 years and older.

How did OEHHA determine the consumption guidelines for fish from Los Banos Reservoir?

- OEHHA compared chemical levels in fish caught from Los Banos Reservoir to levels that are considered safe for human consumption.
- OEHHA's consumption guidelines balance the health benefits of fish consumption and the risks from the contaminants.

What does OEHHA recommend for people who want to eat fish from Los Banos Reservoir?

- OEHHA recommends the types and amounts of fish that may be eaten each week as “servings.” A serving is about the size and thickness of your hand for fish fillets. Give children smaller servings. For smaller fish species, several individual fish may be required to yield a serving.
- Women 18–49 years and children 1–17 years
 - Should not eat black bass species
 - May eat:
 - 1 total serving per week of Common Carp, sunfish species, or Threadfin Shad
- Women 50 years and older and men age 18 years and older
 - May eat:
 - 1 total serving per week of black bass species, or
 - 2 total servings per week of Common Carp, or
 - 3 total servings per week of sunfish species or Threadfin Shad
- For additional fish species found in Los Banos Reservoir and not included in this advisory, OEHHA recommends following the [statewide advisory for eating fish from California’s lakes and reservoirs without site-specific advice](#).

What else can I do to protect my health and the health of my family?

- Eat a variety of fish.
- Eat smaller (younger) fish of legal size.
- Eat only the skinless fillet or meat portion of fish.
- Thoroughly cook the fish, allow the juice to drain away.
- Learn about OEHHA’s guidelines for eating sport fish in California:
 - Visit <https://oehha.ca.gov/fish/advisories>, or call OEHHA at (916) 324-7572 or (510) 622-3170
 - Check the Freshwater or Ocean Sport Fishing Regulations booklets from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, or visit <https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Regulations>



Women
(18-49 Years)

Children
(1-17 Years)

1 TOTAL
SERVING
A WEEK

OR

1 TOTAL
SERVING
A WEEK

0 DO NOT
EAT

Serving Size

A serving of fish is about the size and thickness of your hand. Give children smaller servings.

For Adults



For Children



Women
(50+ Years)

Men
(18+ Years)

3 TOTAL
SERVINGS
A WEEK

OR

2 TOTAL
SERVINGS
A WEEK

OR

1 TOTAL
SERVING
A WEEK

A GUIDE TO EATING FISH *from* LOS BANOS RESERVOIR (MERCED COUNTY)

Eat the Good Fish

Eating fish that are low in chemicals may provide health benefits to children and adults.



Avoid the Bad Fish

Eating fish with higher levels of chemicals like mercury or PCBs may cause health problems in children and adults.



Choose the Right Fish

Chemicals may be more harmful to unborn babies and children.



Sunfish Species



Threadfin Shad



Common Carp



Black Bass Species

 California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment

web www.oehha.ca.gov/fish
email fish@oehha.ca.gov
phone (916) 324-7572

Eat only the skinless fillet



Eat only the meat



Some chemicals are higher in the skin, fat, and guts.