



INFORMATION ABOUT EATING FISH FROM SENATOR WASH RESERVOIR (IMPERIAL COUNTY)

Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA)
California Environmental Protection Agency
May 2021

Why did OEHHA develop an advisory for eating fish from Senator Wash Reservoir?

OEHHA developed an advisory for Senator Wash Reservoir because of mercury and selenium found in the fish caught from this water body. Senator Wash Reservoir is located in Imperial County, approximately 18 miles northeast of Yuma, AZ, on the California side of the Colorado River. 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 Senator Wash Reservoir?

- Mercury
 - Mercury is a metal that comes from natural sources, mining, and air fallout from burning coal and other fuels. It is the most commonly found contaminant 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.
- Selenium
 - Selenium is a metalloid that comes from natural sources and is an essential nutrient.
 - High levels of selenium can cause health problems including hair loss, gastrointestinal distress, dizziness, and tremors.

How did OEHHA determine the consumption guidelines for fish from Senator Wash Reservoir?

- OEHHA compared chemical levels in fish caught from Senator Wash 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 Senator Wash Reservoir?

- OEHHA recommends the amounts and types 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.
- Both the sensitive population (women 18–49 years and children 1–17 years) and the general population (women 50 years and older and men age 18 years and older) may eat:
 - 2 total servings per week of black bass species or Striped Bass, or
 - 3 total servings per week of Common Carp or sunfish species, or
 - 4 total servings per week of Channel Catfish
- For additional fish species found in Senator Wash 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)

4 TOTAL
SERVINGS
A WEEK

OR

3 TOTAL
SERVINGS
A WEEK

OR

2 TOTAL
SERVINGS
A WEEK



Women
(50+ Years)

Men
(18+ Years)

4 TOTAL
SERVINGS
A WEEK

OR

3 TOTAL
SERVINGS
A WEEK

OR

2 TOTAL
SERVINGS
A WEEK

Serving Size

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

For Adults



For Children



A GUIDE TO EATING FISH *from* SENATOR WASH RESERVOIR

(IMPERIAL 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.



Channel Catfish



Common Carp



Sunfish Species



Black Bass Species

♥ high in omega-3s



Striped Bass

♥ high in omega-3s



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.