



INFORMATION ABOUT EATING FISH FROM SUNBEAM LAKE (IMPERIAL COUNTY)

Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA)
California Environmental Protection Agency
May 2023

Why did OEHHA develop an advisory for eating fish from Sunbeam Lake?

OEHHA developed an advisory for Sunbeam Lake because of mercury and selenium found in the fish caught from this water body. Sunbeam Lake is located approximately seven miles west of El Centro, in Imperial County. This advisory is part of an ongoing effort by OEHHA to provide safe-eating advice for fish from 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 be beneficial to the baby's brain development.

Which contaminants are of concern for people eating these fish from Sunbeam Lake?

- Mercury
 - Mercury is a metal that comes from mining, air fallout from burning coal and other fuels, and from 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.
- 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 eating these fish species from Sunbeam Lake?

- OEHHA compared contaminant levels in fish caught from Sunbeam Lake 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 these fish species from Sunbeam Lake?

- 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 may eat:
 - 2 total servings per week of black bass species, or
 - 4 total servings per week of Common Carp or sunfish species, or
 - 7 total servings per week of Channel Catfish or Threadfin Shad
- Women 50 years and older and men 18 years and older may eat:
 - 4 total servings per week of Common Carp or sunfish species, or
 - 5 total servings per week of black bass species, or
 - 7 total servings per week of Channel Catfish or Threadfin Shad
- For additional fish species found in Sunbeam Lake 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](#).

How long is the advisory in effect?

This advisory is effective starting May 2023 and does not expire. Chemical contaminant levels in fish do not change much over time; the advisory remains in effect until an update is issued.

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 and 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)



Women
(50+ Years)

Men
(18+ Years)

7 TOTAL
SERVINGS
A WEEK

OR

4 TOTAL
SERVINGS
A WEEK

OR

2 TOTAL
SERVINGS
A WEEK

7 TOTAL
SERVINGS
A WEEK

OR

4 TOTAL
SERVINGS
A WEEK

OR

5 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
SUNBEAM LAKE
(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



Threadfin Shad



Common Carp



Sunfish Species



Black Bass Species

♥ 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.