

DSHS Issues Fish Consumption Advisory for Texas Coastal Waters

The Texas Department of State Health Services has issued an advisory warning people not to consume or to limit consumption of certain fish caught in all waters off the Texas coast due to unsafe levels of mercury.

Women of childbearing age, including women who are nursing, and children under 12 years old should not consume certain fish off the Texas coast. The advisory recommends women past childbearing age and adult men limit their consumption of fish from this area to no more than one or two meals per month. A meal is 8 ounces of fish. (See chart below for specific recommendations.)

The advisory was issued after testing revealed that fish examined from the northwestern Gulf of Mexico contained mercury at concentrations that exceed DSHS health guidelines of 0.7 mg/kg in the following species: shark (all species), blackfin tuna, blue marlin, little tunny, crevalle jack, king mackerel, swordfish, and wahoo. Regular or long-term consumption of these fish may result in serious adverse health effects.

Mercury is a naturally occurring element that can also be a byproduct of human activity. If consumed regularly, it can cause harmful effects to the central nervous system, particularly in children including those exposed before birth. Symptoms of prolonged exposure include liver damage, tingling of the skin, loss of coordination, visual and hearing impairment, slurred speech and other damage to the brain and nervous system.

Species Affected	Women of Childbearing Age and Children < 12	Women Past Childbearing Age and Adult Men
Blackfin tuna	DO NOT EAT	2 meals/month
Blue marlin	DO NOT EAT	DO NOT EAT
Little tunny (Bonito)	DO NOT EAT	2 meals/month
Crevalle jack	DO NOT EAT	2 meals/month
King mackerel < 35 inches	DO NOT EAT	1 meal/week

King mackerel > 35 inches	DO NOT EAT	2 meals/month
Shark (all species)	DO NOT EAT	2 meals/month
Swordfish	DO NOT EAT	2 meals/month
Wahoo	DO NOT EAT	2 meals/month
<i>Women of childbearing age and children less than 12 years of age or who weigh less than 75 pounds should use caution when eating large cobia or yellowfin tuna. Mean mercury concentrations for these fish do not exceed the DSHS guidelines for protection of human health, but limited mercury data indicate that eating large cobia or yellowfin tuna may pose significant health risks.</i>		

To view the map, advisory and other information about fish testing, go to www.dshs.state.tx.us/seafood.

Note: Advisories are already in place for blue marlin, swordfish, and king mackerel caught off the Texas coast. Consumption recommendations for these fish are included in the chart above.

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