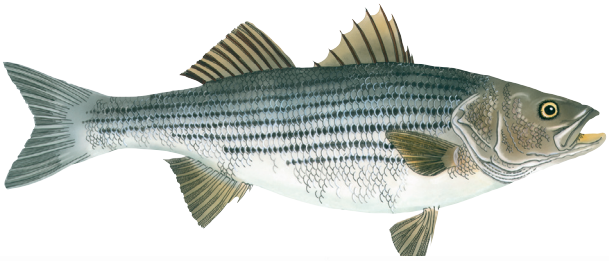
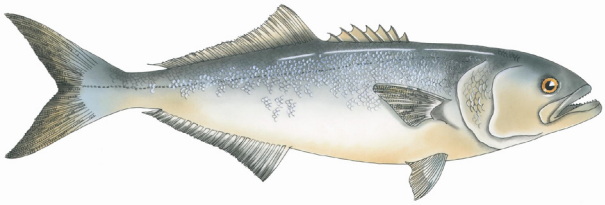
Striped Bass and Bluefish Advisory

November 2011





Safe Eating Guidelines

Pregnant and nursing women,women who may get pregnant, nursing mothers and children under 8:

Should not eat any striped bass or bluefish.

Everyone else should eat no more than **4 meals per year.**

It's hard to believe that fish that looks, smells, and tastes fine may not be safe to eat. But the truth is that striped bass and bluefish have PCBs, dioxins and mercury in them.

Why does Maine have this advisory?

New data from 2001 to 2008 from Maine's striped bass and bluefish have shown PCB levels between 200 and 600 ppb. Previous data showed levels between 10 and 50 ppb. PCB levels in foods are mostly below 30 ppb. Maine worked with other East Coast states to develop consistent advisories based on these data.

Why are PCBs found in striped bass and bluefish?

PCBs are a class of chemicals that don't easily break down, even though they have been banned for over 30 years. These chemicals collect in fat and build up in fish that are fatty and in fish that eat other fish.

As striped bass and bluefish migrate up and down the East Coast, they pick up PCBs from eating other fish. This is especially true for striped bass as they eat fish when spawning in the Hudson River, Delaware Bay or Chesapeake Bay. Generally speaking, striped bass from the Hudson River have the highest levels of PCBs while the lowest levels are found in striped bass that have spawned in North Carolina.

Why should I be concerned about PCBs?

PCBs build up in the fat in our bodies and stay there a long time. When babies are developing in the womb, PCBs can damage the growing brain. This can cause the child learning difficulties as they get older. For that reason, the advisories focus on pregnant women, women of childbearing age, nursing mothers and children under the age of 8.

PCBs can also cause cancer. The advice for everyone else makes sure there is a minimal increase in cancer risk.

What about PCB levels in other marine fish and shellfish?

There are many other marine species that are low in PCBs and can be eaten more frequently. Commonly eaten marine species low in PCBs and other contaminants include Atlantic mackerel, cod, haddock, hake, pollock, shellfish, shrimp, wild salmon and lobster (except for the tomalley which should not be eaten).

Protect your family. Eat fish low in contaminants.

- Check this website: http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/eohp/fish
- Call for advice: **866-292-3474 • TTY: 800-606-0215**

Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention
An Office of the Department of Health and Human Services
Paul R. LePage, Governor
Mary C. Mayhew, Commissioner