

Fact sheet:

Consumption advice for recreationally caught fish



Environment
Protection
Authority Victoria



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Fact sheet

* This fact sheet provides updated advice for consumption of fish following EPA publication 1735.1 (December 2020) and 1672.2 (August 2018)

Standard consumption advice for all freshwater fishers in Australia

Mercury is a common environmental contaminant which can accumulate to harmful levels in fish tissues. Eating fish containing mercury is the most common source of human exposure to mercury.

As a result, Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) recommends that people eat no more than 2 to 3 serves per week of most types of fish and seafood to ensure they are not being exposed to too much mercury:

www.foodstandards.gov.au/consumer/chemicals/mercury

Location specific consumption advice for Victorian fishers based on PFAS

Gippsland area

Lake Kernet, Morwell

- Do not eat fish or eels caught from the lake.

Heart Morass Wetland

- Do not eat fish or eels caught from the wetland.

Lower Latrobe River

- Do not eat more than one serve* of eel per month from the Lower Latrobe River bounded by Heart Morass.
- Do not eat more than one serve* of carp per week caught from the Lower Latrobe River bounded by Heart Morass.

Note, at the time of publication there is no consumption advice for recreational fishing of redfin, yellow belly, mullet or estuary perch from the Lower Latrobe River.

Hazelwood Pondage

- Do not eat more than one serve* of fish per week for adults and one serve* per fortnight for children.

North East Victoria

Bandiana Military Area

- Do not eat carp caught in the Kiewa River between Bakers Lane and the Cudgewa–Wodonga Rail Trail, inclusive of the flood plain area bound by Bakers Lane and the Murray Valley Highway. This advice is only about carp and does not include other fish species.

Skeleton Creek Lower Catchment

- Do not eat fish or eels caught from Skeleton Creek to the south of the Princes Freeway (M1) in Point Cook, Seabrook and Altona Meadows to the bridge to Altona Meadows.

Further information

Contact EPA on
1300 372 842 (1300 EPA VIC) or epa.vic.gov.au
epa.vic.gov.au/pfas

EPA's consumption advice on waterfowl (publication 1732):
epa.vic.gov.au/about-epa/publications/1732

Information about the health effects of PFAS and health-based guideline values for PFAS:
www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/ohp-pfas.htm

Information about EPA's Interagency Work can be found in EPA's *Interim position statement on PFAS* (publication 1669):
epa.vic.gov.au/about-epa/publications/1669-4

* 1 serve for adults is 150 grams. 1 serve for children is 75 grams (about 3 fish fingers).



Consumption advice for recreationally caught fish

Maribyrnong River catchment

Maribyrnong River upstream of Solomons Ford in Avondale Heights (including Deep Creek up to Bulla)

- Do not eat fish caught from Maribyrnong River upstream of Solomons Ford in Avondale Heights (including Deep Creek up to Bulla).

This advice does not include the estuarine reach of the Maribyrnong River downstream of Solomons Ford. Fish tested here were found to have PFAS at acceptable levels. As such, no consumption advice regarding PFAS is needed although the existing consumption advice based on polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) still applies (see below).

Location specific consumption advice for Victorian fishers based on PCBs

Lower Yarra and Maribyrnong Rivers

Women of childbearing age and children under 16 should not eat eels caught in the Lower Yarra and Maribyrnong rivers. Everyone else should limit eating the eels they catch to one serve per month.

Women of childbearing age and children under 16 should limit eating fish caught to one serve per month. Everyone else should limit eating the fish they catch to four serves per month. See www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/fishing-eat-your-catch-with-care for more information.

What is the reason for this advice?

EPA has tested fish for PFAS in waterbodies due to suspected contamination from land-based sources. This is where there has been significant use of PFAS compounds in firefighting activities at Department of Defence bases, firefighting training centres and airports.

Fish in Victorian waterbodies were found to contain varying PFAS concentrations, with some exceeding FSANZ trigger points for investigation. PFAS can remain in the human body for many years and there is a lack of certainty in its potential health effects. EPA advises restricted consumption of fish where PFAS concentrations exceed tolerable daily intakes.

EPA continues to actively work with key government departments on researching and managing impacts related to PFAS contamination.

What is PFAS?

PFAS are a group of chemicals that include perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS), perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorohexane sulfonate (PFHxS).

PFAS have heat, water and stain repelling properties. Because of this, they are used in a range of industrial and consumer products including fire retardants, water proofing, non-stick cookware, food preparation, food packaging, furnishings, and clothing.

PFAS are a concern because they can persist for a long time, both in the environment and in humans.

What are the health effects of PFAS?

FSANZ and the Environmental Health Standing Committee (enHealth) report there is no consistent evidence that PFAS are harmful to human health. However, since these chemicals accumulate and remain in humans and the environment for many years, it is recommended that as a precaution, human exposure to PFAS be minimised wherever possible.

I have been catching and eating fish from affected areas. Should I be concerned?

People who have eaten fish and eels are not considered to be at risk of any adverse health effects.

Until more is known about PFAS, however, EPA recommends that to minimise future exposure to PFAS, do not consume or limit consumption of any fish and eels caught from the affected waterbodies according to the recommendations above.

Further information

Further information regarding Victorian sites currently under investigation can be found on EPA's website: epa.vic.gov.au/for-community/environmental-information/pfas/pfas-and-epas-role

What are PCBs?

Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) were used from the 1930s to the 1970s in industrial products. They have now been phased out, but they stay in the environment for a long time. PCBs can build up in the human body. If a person eats large amounts of contaminated fish, PCBs may affect their health.