



North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services
Office of Public Affairs

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For release: Immediate
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Mercury, PCB Contamination Found in Bass, Catfish in Mountain Island Lake

RALEIGH — The N.C. Division of Public Health has issued a fish consumption advisory for channel catfish and largemouth bass in Mountain Island Lake in Gaston and Mecklenburg Counties. Elevated levels of PCBs have been found in channel catfish; therefore, health officials are recommending that people avoid eating channel catfish from Mountain Island Lake.

PCB testing in largemouth bass from Mountain Island Lake was indeterminate; however, previous studies have shown that largemouth bass in all waters of North Carolina have elevated levels of mercury. Pregnant women, nursing women, women who may become pregnant, and children under age 15 should not eat any largemouth bass. To guard against mercury exposure and potential PCB exposure, other people should not eat more than two meals a month of largemouth bass from Mountain Island Lake. A meal is considered approximately 6 ounces of uncooked fish.

PCBs may adversely impact the neurological development of children, the reproductive system, the immune system, and may cause cancer. Mercury mostly affects nerve cells in the brain and spinal cord, especially in unborn babies and young children. Prenatal mercury exposure can affect the way children think, learn and problem-solve later in life. Adverse health effects also can occur in adults at much higher doses.

The PCB and mercury contamination in the fish does not present a known health risk for people engaging in other recreational activities such as touching the water, wading, swimming, boating or handling the fish.

More information on the new health advice and related issues is on the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services' Fish Consumption Advisories website at www.epi.state.nc.us/epi/fish, or call the N.C. Division of Public Health at 919-707-5900.

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