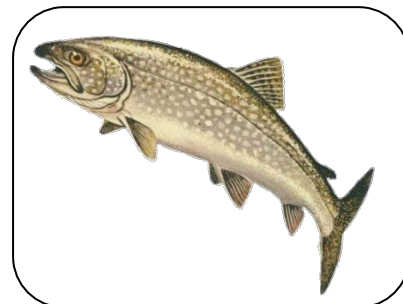




The Health Effects of Mercury in Fish

Fish is a good source of nutrition. It is high in protein, vitamin B and omega-3 fatty acids (good fatty acids). The health benefits of eating fish outweigh the potential risks. Mercury is a contaminant that can be found in fish. Levels of mercury differ from lake to lake and can be due to human activities or to natural causes. Health Canada has established guidelines on what levels of mercury are acceptable to consume. In general, to reduce exposure, it is recommended that people do the following:

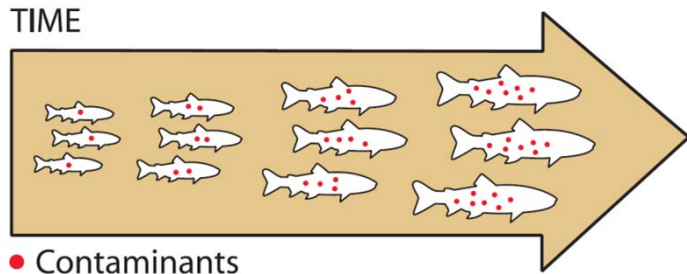
- Eat smaller fish (these are usually younger too)
- Eat more fish that are lower in the food chain, such as whitefish or grayling and eat less that are higher in the food chain such as walleye, northern pike or lake trout



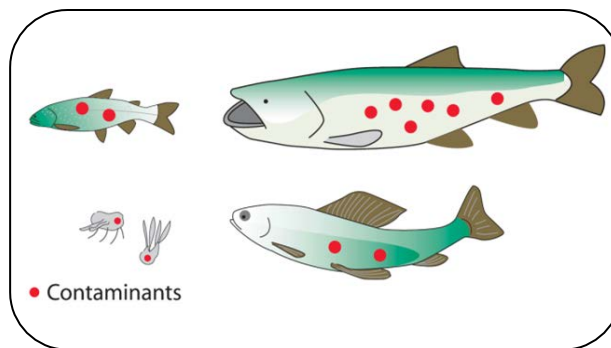
Lake Trout

A type of mercury called *methylmercury* is made by small organisms in the water and soil called bacteria. As fish feed in these waters, they absorb the methylmercury and it builds up in them. Almost all fish have small amounts of methylmercury. Fish that eat other fish may have higher levels of mercury due to *biomagnification*. Larger, older fish may also have higher levels of mercury because they have been exposed to it for longer. This is called *bioaccumulation*. If fish exposed to methylmercury are eaten, the fish can impact on your health.

TIME



Bioaccumulation



Biomagnification

How Can Mercury Affect My Health?

Methylmercury can build up in your blood stream over time if you regularly eat fish that have been exposed. Methylmercury may affect your brain and other organs.

Symptoms of mercury poisoning may include:

- ✓ Numbness or pain in certain parts of your skin
- ✓ Shaking or “tremors”
- ✓ Difficulty walking
- ✓ Vision or hearing problems
- ✓ Memory problems
- ✓ Seizures
- ✓ Brain damage
- ✓ Kidney Damage

How Can Mercury Affect Children?

Young children are more sensitive to mercury than adults. Pregnant women who eat contaminated fish may pass the mercury to their child, which may result in brain damage, blindness, seizures, and the inability to speak.

Where Can I Get More Information About Mercury and Fish Safety?

To find out if there are any fish advisories in your area, visit the Department of Health and Services website at www.hss.gov.nt.ca or contact your local Environmental Health office.

Hay River area: (867) 874-6956

Inuvik area: (867) 777-4840 / 777-4841

Yellowknife head office: (867) 669-8979