Information & Advisories
Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA)
Safe eating guidelines: advisories & fish consumption benefits
http://www.oehha.ca.gov/fish.html

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
National fish consumption advice for women of childbearing age and children
www.epa.gov/waterscience/fish/advisory.html

U.S. Food and Drug Administration
800-SAFEFOOD
www.sfsan.fda.gov/seafood1.html

Environmental Health Investigations Branch
Ca. Dept. of Health Services
http://www.ehib.org

Physician for Social Responsibility
Safe eating pocket guide and fact sheets
http://www.mercuryaction.org

Cal EPA Dept. of Toxics Substances Control
http://dtsc.ca.gov/HazardousWaste/Mercury/index.cfm

If you find toxins in your home contact:
1-800-CLEANUP (1-800-253-2687)
http://ccelearn.csus.edu/mercurylamp/content/resources5.htm
Or http://www.earth911.org

Fish are nutritious, good for you and part of many of our peoples’ cultures and traditional diets.

By making safe choices you eat fish safely, avoiding fish that can harm you, your developing baby, nursing infants and children.
Balance the health benefits of fish

Fish are an important source of omega-3 fatty acids, which are essential to human health for proper development and maintenance of the brain, nervous system and cells of developing fetus, babies, children and adults. Omega-3s also protect against heart disease and stroke.

Mercury: Toxic in the Body

- In pregnant women, mercury crosses the placenta and enters the blood of a developing fetus. During breastfeeding, small amounts enter infants through breast milk.
- Children can be affected by mercury in fish during all growth years (birth through teenage years).
- Pregnant or planning on becoming pregnant? Mercury stays in the human body for about 1 year. Teenage girls and women in their childbearing years should follow the advice in this brochure.
- If you feel you, your baby or your child may be at risk, talk to your doctor.

How does Mercury get into Fish?

Mercury was used during the Gold Rush to extract gold. It is estimated that 10-11 million pounds or more was lost into California lakes, streams, rivers and bays. Small organisms and fish eat particles of it and as it goes up the food chain the levels increase with each larger and older fish.

Tribal and Community-based organizations are working with Agencies to find solutions and push for cleanup. Contact CIEA to find out more and to get involved!

To Protect Your Baby & Family

- Do the math. Advisories are based on meals of a 6 oz. serving for a 151lb. adult. 6 oz. is roughly the size of two packs of cards. You can visit a mercury calculator website such as www.mercurycalculator@gotmercury.org. Always check their listed levels against those listed at FDA and OEHHA websites below.

Eating wild-caught fish?

- Some kinds of fish and locations are safer than others so Check local warnings for the area where fish are caught. Certain lakes and rivers in California have health advisories, which can be found at OEHHA http://ww.oehha.ca.gov/
- Avoid fish with high levels of mercury. Avoid large predatory fish. Eat smaller younger fish which generally contain less mercury. The exception are wild river-caught Salmon that have naturally low levels of mercury. At this time, in California and Oregon these Salmon are endangered.
- If there are no local health advisories in your area, follow recommendations in this brochure, the PSR website www.mercuryaction.org or at the FDA website: www.cfsan.fda.gov/~frf/sea-mehg.html.

More Tips for Safer Fish

- Eat Alaskan wild river-caught salmon: naturally high in omega-3 fatty acids, low in mercury and PCBs, and best for the environment! Salmon in lakes and reservoirs have higher levels of mercury. Check advisories & advocate for salmon habitat protection!
- If pregnant, avoid raw fish, like sushi, or raw shellfish, like uncooked oysters and shrimp. Cook fish until it flakes with a fork.
- Mercury is stored in entire fish. You cannot see mercury and you cannot clean the head guts, fat and skin to get rid of it. But, other toxins, like PCBs may be stored there so trimming off these areas is still a good idea.
- To avoid these other toxins, remove or puncture the skin before cooking so fat can drain off
- Don’t save drippings for reuse.

Other ways to Protect your Family from toxins

- If heated, Mercury will vaporize and can easily enter the body by breathing in the vapors. If spilled call Toxic Substances Control in your area. DO NOT VACCUM IT. This will cause it to turn to vapor.
- Replace mercury thermometers with digital ones.
- Firewood, basketmaking materials or food gathered near mercury laden sediments may contain mercury soil or dust. Secure access to safe gathering locations.
- Consider, sources of contaminants in all foods since there are likely to be cumulative risks. As always, limit your families exposure to pesticides, lead, plastics, asbestos serpentine), chlorine, arsenic and other toxins.